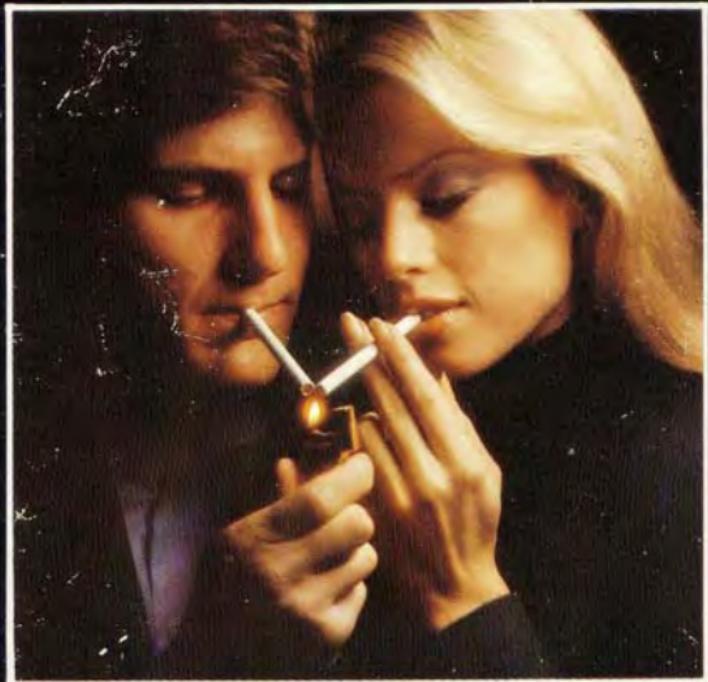


# MEDIA SEXPLORATION

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YOU ARE BEING SEXUALLY  
MANIPULATED AT THIS VERY MOMENT.  
DO YOU KNOW HOW?

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THE HIDDEN IMPLANTS IN AMERICA'S MASS  
MEDIA — AND HOW THEY PROGRAM AND CONDITION YOUR  
SUBCONSCIOUS MIND. THE SHOCK-EXPOSURE SEQUEL TO  
SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION.

---

BY WILSON BRYAN KEY

---

WITH 49 EYE-OPENING PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES

## In Gratitude

I wish to express my appreciation to those kind friends who supported and helped with the research that made this book possible. These include the hundreds of students in my classes over the past six years, the thousands of interested and patient people in lecture audiences across the nation, and the many who have written, called, or spoken to me about their reactions to my research into American media.

Though the publication of *Subliminal Seduction* plunged my wife and me into a veritable caldron of often painful controversy, we have been steadily encouraged with the realization we are not alone in our anxious concern over what appears to be happening to the people of North America. Ruthless avaricious self-interest, indifference toward human suffering, repressed blindness toward realities, and endless sensory indulgences are the modern four horsemen of the Apocalypse. It is at least comforting to know they are so widely recognized.

Many, many students contributed to the manuscript research, far too many to ever individually thank. A handful, however, worked closely over many months on areas critical to the book's factual structure. These included James Johnston, R. Lee Palser, and Peter Stemp—who also contributed heavily to my earlier book—and Carol Applegate, Darlene Bourdon, Rosemary Broemling, Grace Ciappa, Peter Clare, Steven Collins, Mark Hammon, Ron Ludlow, and Dan Peterson.

I was also grateful for the exchange of information on *The Exorcist* with feature writer Joe Campbell of *The Delaware*

## MEDIA SEXPLORATION

State News & Daily Eagle. John W. T. Judson, Canadian solicitor and good friend, helped hold the Philistines at bay until the manuscript could be completed.

Special and affectionate appreciation should be expressed for both their friendship and their encouragement to a very long list of colleagues which included Marshall, Corrine, and Eric McLuhan, Orrin and Evelyn Klapp, Jean Veevers, and Douglas Cousineau. Dr. Murray Hoover's humanistic orientation toward the complex world of addictive behavior was much more important than he will ever realize. Artists Henk Vervoets and York Wilson helped importantly by sharing their unique perceptions of reality. Ian Connerty, Canadian political scientist, supplied pragmatic insights into the complex politics of the communication industry.

And, finally, once again Jean Stone should receive a medal for valor in return for her patience with my overly creative grammar and original spelling.

This author was fortunate to know and honored to work with people such as these.

W. B. K.

Costa Mesa, California

The perverse are hard  
to be corrected, and the number  
of fools is infinite.

Ecclesiastes 2:16

## MaMa Media: An Introduction

Marshall McLuhan started his introduction to Professor Key's earlier book, Subliminal Seduction, with a joke: A customer in an antique shop asked "What's new?" It has taken me a full year and a careful reading of this new book to appreciate the depth and seriousness of what I had initially perceived (and forgotten) as a cute little joke. What's new is old and has a lot of meaning if we expend the time and effort to perceive that what is new is what is old. Advertising is old, but its technology is new. The theories of human behavior upon which effective advertising is based are old, but the techniques used are new. The audience, in one way or another, is forever new: new because of age, or new because of innocence.

This is what Professor Key's book on Media Sexploitation. is all about. It is a comprehensive and integrated work, which demonstrates how theories of human behavior are surreptitiously being used by some advertisers to manipulate, control, and direct our buying behavior. Where his earlier book dealt primarily with visual deceit, this book continues not only with more examples of visual deceit, but also extensions into auditory and olfactory deception techniques.

In his chapter on The Exorcist, Key reveals the remarkable way both audio and visual technologies were integrated and mutually reinforced to produce the film's frightening effect. Brief flashes of light on the screen projected consciously imperceptible death-mask apparitions. Strange and frightening ix

sounds, in what might be called an audio collage, wove in and out of scenes to heighten the sensation of fear.

A variety of similar techniques are also discussed, which attest to the overwhelming ability of media to manipulate man—to produce uncontrollable fear and deep visceral responses. In his chapter on odors, you will gain new insights regarding Mr. Clean and the sperm whale. You may be shocked when you read about the drug culture and rock music.

Modern technology has provided new ways to manipulate sight, sound, and smell in multisensory approaches to human deception, which are designed to bypass our conscious defenses and enter our subconscious.

Professor Key's concern is not so much that we are exploited, as that we do not know that we are exploited. He has no quarrel with mutually agreed-upon seduction, but is violently opposed to deceitful seduction—and so against sexploration.

Even when we are given overwhelming knowledge of this sexploration, as Key has provided, we are somewhat reluctant to believe it. Even if we get to the point of believability, we feel helpless in combatting it. But combat it we must, because unless we do, it can become a malignant, psychologically terminal disease.

So what's new? Better yet, what's old? One thing that's old is sayings like "Don't let them pull the wool over your eyes." It's so old and so familiar that we have put it in the dead-storage compartment of our memory, where it has gathered dust and rust. We have heard it enough, we know what it means, we have in a way labelled it, so now we can forget about it.

So what's new? Well, perhaps we should recycle the old saying, "Don't let them pull the wool over your eyes" and re-vitalize it to distill its truth for 1976 and the years beyond. Old sayings, like works of art, persisted throughout the history of mankind because their message, sometimes hidden, transcends time and place.

Key's reference to ads based on the classical sculpture The Three Graces is a case in point. Since we have advanced from an agricultural to a highly technical society, let us accept the fact that there are not as many wool merchants

around. There are, however, many merchants around merchandizing products which are not much different from one another.

Ads are designed for emotional, not intellectual impact; in educational terms, for affective rather than cognitive appeal. Ad men do not rely on thinking, but rather feeling.

Also, read about how advertising people rely on demographic and psychographic studies of the population to design advertising to our individual images of ourselves. The demographic information tells them about such things as our age, sex, finances, and the like. The psychographic data tells them about our fantasies and intimate personal habits. Such data provide a personal profile that the advertising conglomerate uses so that their ad fits our profile. When this happens, they have got us and can manipulate our buying behavior. We've been had!

So Buyer Beware! Beware first of advertising designed to project you into a Dizzyworld of Fantasy. This is the message of Media Sexploitation. So what's new? "Don't let them pull the ads over your eyes." Beware also that they don't pull the ads over your ears, nose, or any other sensory input.

### Regarding Theory

The theories Dr. Key uses to support his analysis of ads are not new. What is new—is his perceptual insight that has strongly related psychological theories to the practices of advertising. Freud's psychoanalytical theories, such as the oral, anal, and Oedipal stages of human development, provide the rationale behind the themes of many ads. Freud believed that children grow through a series of dynamically differentiated stages during the first five years of life. Frustration and anxiety accompany each new step in the child's development. Throughout his book. Key speculates on how certain ads and media are psychographically tuned to play on a person's fixations experienced during his personality development as a child.

The importance of cueing-in information retrieval can be easily demonstrated by having people look at a picture or an ad for a few minutes and then asking them to tell you what they saw. Initially, they will tell you quite a bit, and then less

and less. When they get to the point of "I can't remember anything else," provide some verbal cues like "remember the vase next to the books? Tell me about its shape." You will find that verbal cues trigger information that had been stored in memory, in such a way that it was not readily retrievable. Dr. Ralph Norman Haber has written extensively on information retrieval and picture memory.

According to Key, there is no way to defend ourselves from subliminal stimuli, since they circumvent our normal defense mechanisms—mechanisms outlined by Freud as repression, projection, reaction formation, fixation, and regression. These are ways that help us deny, falsify, or distort reality, so—some theorists suggest—we can avoid anxiety and survive conflicts with socialization demands.

Much of what Freud said about art is relevant to advertising. Freud saw in art an opportunity to use fantasy for the fulfillment of wishes that are thwarted and frustrated in ordinary life, either by external obstacles or internal moral inhibitions. In the following 1913 quote from Freud, try substituting the word 'ad' for 'art':

... Art is a conventionally accepted reality in which, thanks to artistic illusion, symbols and substitutes are able to provoke real emotions. Thus art constitutes a region half-way between a reality which frustrates wishes and the wishfulfilling world of the imagination—a region in which, as it were, primitive man's strivings for omnipotence are still in full force.

## Regarding Research

Roughly speaking, there are two broad categories of research: experimental and descriptive. Experimental research consists of a tightly controlled situation, usually occurring in a laboratory, with statistical design, randomized groupings, etc. Professor Key's work is not experimental, but rather descriptive, as was Freud's. It occurs in the so-called "real world" and consists of careful gathering of data through observations, surveys, interviews, and so forth. Both methods can be valid or invalid depending upon how rigorously they

are conducted. Both hope to extend our field of knowledge by testing existing theories and hypothesizing new ones.

One interesting thing about Dr. Key's research is that it is based firmly on actual observable situations in media and advertising that are not experimentally contrived. He uses multidisciplinary theories to relate these observations to theory. Our beneficent ad and media men are spending billions of dollars each year to provide Dr. Key with interesting research stimuli he can use to test the validity of existing theories of human behavior. More researchers should take advantage of this resource. Marketing researchers have, but their studies on the effect of advertising and media are highly secret and made for quite a different reason.

Key's studies are highly innovative, as were Vance Packard's back in the early sixties. It is heuristic research, which helps us discover and learn and encourages further investigations. Testable hypotheses based on his work should find their way into the galaxy of social scientists who are doing experimental research in the universities. This could provide converging independent data, useful in supporting or questioning his position.

Theories in Key's thinking are only tools which provide a structure for inquiry. They need only be useful to justify their existence. Some may consider his research too speculative and not supportable. Time will have to decide this. In the meantime, while the scientific community studies human behavior in laboratory situations. Key studies it in the world of media and advertising, gathering evidence on how human behavior theory is being used by some to manipulate our buying, regardless of the cost to the human psyche.

### Regarding Technique

One of the major techniques used to teasingly bide or disguise information—that of embedding—is not new. A few years ago, I visited the New York Metropolitan Museum to see a special display of fine old tapestries from France. They were, of course, beautiful, breathtaking, colorful, and highly tactile. Some were unbelievably large, covering huge walls. A few were unbelievable because of the peculiar shapes and sizes of phallic symbols embedded in the foliage. Perhaps the

crew of artisans were at odds with the nobility who commissioned the work and decided to make a nonverbal statement—to broadcast their grievances to the world.

A recent exhibit at Xerox Square, prepared by Lillian Silver, entitled "Curious Deceptions in Art and Play" further demonstrated how far back this technique reaches. Hidden portrait-type pictures were a favorite of eighteenth-century artists, who would use the technique for satirical comment on current events. Likenesses of royalty, politicians, and military men would be hidden by the artists in foliage, flowers, urns, architecture, and landscapes. Two centuries later, this phenomenon was discovered and experimented with by the Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin, who was studying the role of figure-ground relationships in visual perceptions. His famous reversible figure-ground profiles and vase, first published in\* 1915, have been used over and over to illustrate countless psychology and other textbooks- Highly illustrated information on this can be found in my Perception and Photography (Prentice-Hall, 1975), which presents a Gestalt approach to how we process visual information by simplifying it.

Embedding of figure-ground is used extensively in preparing some advertising copy. What you see when you look at an ad is called figure and it is always against some ground. Black letters on this page, for example, are figure. You do not attend to the white shapes around the letters that serve as ground. Old sayings such as "Be sure to read between the lines" and "What is not said is more important than what is said" have a common origin with embedded information. The art of embedding involves the application of skills, technology, and understanding of human perception and behavior to arrange information, so that what is obvious is seen as figure. This serves as a decoy for the real message, which can be hidden within the ground (foliage, flowers, landscapes, reflections in bottles, ice cubes, symbols, and so forth). Although it is not consciously obvious, it may very well be obvious to our subconscious and recorded there. If the medium is the message, as McLuhan suggests, then perhaps the medium is ground. Ground is message, figure is decoy—so Buyer Beware!

Contemporary artists who have used ground to deliver their messages include such notables as Salvador Dali, in the

"Slave Market with Apparition of the Invisible Bust of Voltaire" and Maurits Escher, who began using figure-ground designs as early as 1921. These works were discussed in Scientific American articles by Fred Attneave and Marianne L. Teuber.

Another interesting technique used to embed is the use of anamorphic images—what you see yourself as when you look into a funny mirror at an amusement park or into a shiny coffee pot at home. The image is highly distorted, often grotesque, consciously distinguishable at times, but at other times not. Again, the technique is not new. As early as 1533, Hans Holbein painted The Ambassadors, two dignitaries with elbows resting on a mantelpiece and an eerie, slanted anamorphic painting of a consciously unrecognizable (except when viewed from a certain angle) human skull, seemingly floating in the air—perhaps a subconscious death message.

Surprisingly few people, including artists, are familiar with anamorphic art—except, of course, those in advertising. Photointerpreters and optical engineers are very familiar with anamorphic problems, but from a different point of view. Anamorphic images are sometimes planned, sometimes accidental. Professor Key refers to an article written by Gay Talese, in which a young boy reveals a true account of his twenty-year obsession with a nude photograph. My curiosity aroused, I located the article in the August 1975 issue of Esquire. When I looked at the photograph, it puzzled me why such a benign-looking picture should have such holding power on a man. A careful study will reveal a mysterious and awesome shadow alongside the nude woman—an anamorphic projection of her own shadow, which would look quite normal if it had fallen on a flat surface. It is rather eerie and compelling, as is the anamorphic skull from which she turns her face. The picture is much more than a nude lying on the sand, and there is much more that can be said about it. For more information about anamorphic art, try the January 1975 issue of Scientific American.

## Regarding Believability

When you finish reading Media Sexploitation, you should become a believer in the potential power of media and advertis-

## MEDIA SEXPLORATION

ing to influence, control, and direct our behavior. You should also become a thinker and look at media and advertising in a more critical fashion- Stop, Look, Listen, and Question. Talk back to the ads that you see and hear, question their intent, analyze the techniques being used to persuade you. Consider your personal needs and possible shortcomings and decide whether or not the ads are not, in fact, exploiting your weaknesses, fears, and anxieties. Not all advertising exploits, but the ads that do constitute advertising malpractice.

The purpose of advertising is to persuade, to sell products. For some advertising agencies, this may mean selling regardless of the human consequences. Advertising is very big business and, at times, under the archaic illusion that what is good for advertising is good for the country. Advertising is part of a much larger conglomerate, which includes Marketing and Media. All are interdependent, but are dependent upon the consumer for survival. And there, dear friends, is where our collective strength lies.

Richard D. Zakia  
Director/Instructional Development  
Rochester Institute of Technology

# Contents

## "MaMa Media: An Introduction," by Richard D. Zakia

xix

1	The Commercial Appropriation of the Unconscious	1
2	The Gay Playboy's Penthouse	16
3	The Fashion Massage	36
4	Children of the Tit Culture	52
5	The American Clean	64
6	That Clean, Odorless Smell	79
7	The Exorcist Massage Parlor	98
8	Subliminal Rock	117
9	Cultural Conditioning for Addiction	146
10	The Filter Tip Medicine Show	163
11	All the News That Sells	180
12	Even the Killings Are Funny	206
	Epilogue	217
	Appendices	
	A—Bridge Over Troubled Water	218
	B—The Canons of Journalism	219
	Bibliography	222
	Index	225

# Prologue

People who want a sane, static, measurable world take the first aspect of an event or person and stick to it, with an almost self-protective obstinacy, or by a natural limitation of their imaginations. They do not indulge in either deepening or magnifying.

ANAIIS NIN

D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study

Can democracy survive  
the mass media?

ROBERT CIRINO  
Don't Blame the People

# The Commercial Appropriation of the Unconscious

... one of the chief sources of cultural paranoia is the ever-widening rift between the beliefs of a people and their actual behavior, and the tacit assumption among these same people that this practice—this contradiction between idealism and practice—is a normal state of affairs.

LIONEL RUBINOFF  
The Pornography of Power

## The Subliminal Sell

This book probes the individual and social effects of mass communication media, their use of subliminal techniques, and what these media are doing to American society.

The American culture was founded upon the basic concept of free will—the belief that all individuals can in their own interest consciously determine for themselves their moral values, political and economic interests, and social environment. Indeed, free will is the foundation of all Western democratic and republican philosophical thought. Therefore, it is

especially difficult for Americans to believe this treasured concept of free will has been subverted and appropriated in the interest of an efficient merchandising-consumer oriented economic system.

It may also be difficult to believe that a secret technology has existed and been in widespread use for years which modifies behavior invisibly, channels basic value systems, and manages human motives in the interest of special power structures. This all reads much too much like the past half century of science fiction.

In spite of the evidence presented in this book, most Americans will still find it difficult to believe that their trusted, high-credibility information sources long ago betrayed them into the hands of profit-hungry marketing executives who have quietly researched, developed, and exhaustively applied a subliminal technology of communication that now appears to be driving larger and larger segments of the population into pathological behaviors.

"Subliminal," of course, is merely another word for the unconscious, subconscious, deep mind, third brain—there are a dozen labels which have attempted to describe the portion of the human brain which retains information and operates without our conscious awareness. Today, subliminal stimuli assaults the psyches of everyone in North America throughout each day of their lives—from infancy into old age. The effects of this bombardment are cumulative.

Subliminal stimuli in art often involve humor. Many theories of humor, in fact, involve the invisible functions of the unconscious. To some extent, we all enjoy being tricked—being made victims of our own illusions and fantasies. America's popular literature is rich in archetypal fables about the con artist or magician who deceives someone by manipulating their greed and selfishness. We become angry only when we discover the deceiver has taken advantage of us individually instead of the other guy. And, of course, we are usually unwilling to concede we have been tricked, or unwilling to consciously admit to our greed and selfishness which made us vulnerable.

## The Commercial Appropriation of the Unconscious

### Jantzen Looks for You?

To briefly illustrate subliminal stimuli, study the rather innocuous advertisement for Jantzen swimsuits that appeared in the Canadian edition of the April 1972 Reader's Digest (see Figure 1).

The ad portrays two suntanned models posed crotch-deep in boiling surf, wearing red and blue swimsuits designed on a Union Jack motif, still a stirring patriotic symbol for many Canadians. The fabric designs also incorporate portions of the red maple leaf, now the national emblem of Canada.

The ad's headline reads, "Jantzen looks for you." The question of at what or where Jantzen looks for you is not explained. But as the ad copy affirms, "the All-Canadian statement at better stores everywhere." What could be more reasonable than urging readers to buy a swimsuit and "capture a piece of beach where you can watch the sun go by?" His and hers making "a joint statement in patriotic red, white, and blue." Who could be so unfeeling as to question the motives of a company so deeply concerned with good health, patriotism and togetherness?

Before reading further, I urge the reader to relax and study the Jantzen ad. How does it make you feel?

There appear to be several details in the photograph which do not make sense. First, the female model's trunks do not fit. Notice the wrinkles and sagging front. Considering the high cost of commercial art, the least the art director might have done was find a correctly sized suit for the female model.

But look again. The female model's trunks also have a zipper fly—a highly functional device in men's clothing, but not really necessary in women's.

On the other hand, the male model's trunks fit quite snugly. And in addition, his suit design matches the female's brassiere. In short, she is wearing his and he is wearing hers.

The art director has utilized a subliminal sex-role reversal strategy. This dissonant idea of men wearing women's clothes, highly taboo in our culture, will not be perceived consciously. But it will be instantly perceived at the unconscious level.

For reasons we will probe later, the unconscious portion of

## MEDIA SEXPLOITATION

the brain is highly sensitive to dissonant elements of a picture, event, or scene which do not add up logically or which violate cultural taboos. This sensitivity is easily demonstrated in hypnosis. Unconscious perceptual sensitivity appears most acute when the stimuli involves a cultural taboo in subject areas of reproductive behavior (sex) and death.

Another somewhat disconcerting question involves the female hand, gently resting upon the female model's hip. With the wrist at that angle, there is no way it can belong to the female model—unless her arm is six feet long. The hand, resting on this erogenous zone, suggests subliminally the possibility of a menage a trois relationship—two women and a man. There is a third model standing beside the two models.

### Feeling Is Also Believing

Shortly after encountering the Jantzen advertisement, I was having lunch with a young woman sociology professor and several other faculty friends. The group was vaguely familiar with my field of research, but none had seen or discussed the Jantzen ad.

After she had studied the ad for a minute or so, I asked the young woman how it made her feel.

"It makes me feel cool, I think," she replied.

"Cold?" I asked.

"No. Cool, fresh, refreshing, pleasant."

"Where does it make you feel cool?" I probed. "Where on your body?"

"On my thighs," she replied thoughtfully.

"Where on your thighs?"

"Up high, near my—" She broke into a laugh.

Her response to the ad was the kind of response you become familiar with after dealing with subliminal stimuli for several years. People often respond with quite specific feelings without conscious knowledge of what is guiding their response.

Looking at the ad, you might easily justify the "cool" feeling in the upper thighs as a projection into the cool surf in which the two—or three—models are standing. But there was something included in the Jantzen advertisement the pro-

## The Commercial Appropriation of the Unconscious

lessor had not consciously perceived. She was quite surprised when it was pointed out.

If you hold the ad upside down (see Figure 2), a face appears in the surf. The face is reminiscent of the old Farmer's Almanac drawing of the weatherman, cheeks distended, his puckered mouth blowing the cold north winds down across the nation. The old weatherman in the surf is—perhaps we should look the other way—blowing on a delicate portion of the model's anatomy.

This is a subliminal embed, or at least one form of embedding used to invade the reader's unconscious. There are many such techniques in use today and they do many things to people—things besides simply selling products.

## The Still Undiscovered Brain

Subliminal stimuli's subtle effects upon human behavior are most difficult to specify in simple cause-and-effect terminology. At least the symptoms of what "subs" do to people, can be demonstrated with mechanical devices that register the operation of unconscious processes inside the brain and body—the electroencephalograph (EEG) galvanic skin response measurements (GSR); retinascopes, which measure the compulsive expansion and contraction of the eye's retina; the Mackworth camera, which tracks the lightning-fast movements of the eye's fovea across any visual scene; the polygraph or so-called lie detector; and a score of similar devices. The inked graphs produced by these machines tell us, indeed, that something is going on. But the precise nature of the complex process remains largely unknown. One neurophysiologist friend delights in reminding his more abstract-theory-oriented colleagues that we do not really understand how a human is able to lift and lower his Onger. The interrelated factors involved in even this simplest of all gestures are awesomely complicated.

Some students of the brain believe we may never know how the processes work. In the meantime, we can deal with what goes on inside the brain only through the help of various theories. And, there is no completely validated theory of language or behavior. For example, I have no idea whether Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, or for that matter,

J. B. Watson were right or wrong about human behavior. Perhaps they were all producers only of elaborate, self-flattering illusions. On the other hand, perhaps all hit truth right on the mark. These great theorists and the many others who followed them, however, gave us a way of viewing human behavior that over the past half century has often proven useful.

One relatively simple, though useful, theory involves a hypothetical model of the brain as containing two major systems or levels of operation that respond to perceptual (sensory) inputs. For the moment, limit your consideration to these two systems—conscious, or cognitive, and unconscious.

Though they are highly integrated at some unknown level, each system has the capability of operating independently of the other. Instead of the simplistic five senses of Aristotle—sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell—which are still anachronistically taught in many universities today, there are at least thirty-seven known, differentiated sensory inputs into the brain.

These so far definable thirty-seven senses appear to operate simultaneously and constantly, with a dominant bias shifting from one sense to another. An enormous quantity of perceived information is thus fed into, we believe, the brain's outer layer or cerebral cortex. In the cortex small quantities of data are somehow edited into consciousness. Another portion is directed into unconscious storage. And, much irrelevant data is probably dumped.

There is no simple, single dividing line in the brain between the conscious and unconscious systems. The threshold between the two constantly shifts and fluctuates. Perceptual defenses are believed to involve a rerouting process whereby threatening or taboo percepts are shunted into the unconscious. Though repression is generally considered the major perceptual defense, others include isolation, regression, fantasy formation, sublimation, denial, projection, and introjection.

What is vaguely called consciousness is a very limited state of awareness, considering all that is available. The unconscious, on the other hand, includes a vast memory storage system which includes repressed data that we would find difficult to cope with at the conscious level.

## "Subliminal" Means Unconscious

Under the term subliminal stimuli, my primary concern here is with only that group of consciously unperceived words and picture symbols purposely designed into media with the motive of soliciting, manipulating, modifying, or managing human behavior. Most of what we perceive, we have no conscious awareness of having perceived. Subliminal stimuli probably account for much of the vaguely defined entities often explained as "culture" or "aesthetics."

One of the enigmatic aspects of subliminal perception phenomena recently involved a most excellent and comprehensive study published in England by Dr. N. F. Dixon. His book views perception from the perspective of an experimental, behaviorist psychologist, and details exhaustive laboratory research on subliminal phenomena.

But Dr. Dixon's most carefully researched book never once suggests the author's awareness of what is going on around him in the real world with great intensity through television, magazines, motion pictures, newspapers, radio, and billboards. The paradox is eloquent testimony to the power of human perceptual defenses—those techniques we can use to hide or disguise from ourselves what is going on around us. Strangely, these unconscious defenses appear exceptionally powerful among the so-called "trained observers": scientists, physicians, engineers, and other specialists.

Most of the available published research on subliminal phenomena in North America since the mid-fifties has been conducted by eight scholars—G. S. Klein and R. R. Holt at New York University, L. Luborsky and H. Shevrin at the Menninger Foundation, C. Fischer at Mt. Sinai Hospital, E. R. Hilgard at Stanford University, N. F. Dixon in London, and G. J. W. Smith, who has worked both in the United States and in Sweden. Though interesting and often revealing, none of their studies—and I believe most would agree—even scratched the surface.

## SEX in Politics

The word SEX is frequently hidden in political propaganda, advertisements, and television and motion-picture frames. The

simple three-letter symbol, usually invisible to consciousness, appears instantly perceivable at the unconscious level.

In a recent U.S. congressional election campaign in Virginia's 10th District, SEX "embeds" were discovered in the campaign literature of all candidates except one who could not afford to hire an advertising agency. In Figure 3, one example of embedded campaign literature is shown. If you relax under a good light, the very lightly etched letters are easily apparent. Check the marked inset detail. There are in addition dozens of SEX embeds in this photograph of the candidate.

This election was fascinating. When a charge was made against the use of subliminal devices in campaign literature, the press around the Washington area generally rallied to the support of the candidates who had used the advertising agencies. Everyone was aghast at the audacious charge one newspaper referred to as a "sex hoax" campaign gimmick. Though many Virginia journalists privately admitted they could clearly perceive the embeds, they still claimed in print the whole idea of subliminal perception being used in an election campaign far too bizarre to be plausible. Yet these embedding techniques have been used in every political campaign of any magnitude in the United States and Canada for at least twenty-five years—if not much, much longer, SEX embeds can even be designed into campaign buttons.

A formal complaint was initiated by one candidate with the Virginia Election Commission, charging the use of subliminal techniques in the candidates' literature. The commission refused to accept the complaint, even though SEX embeds are quite easy for most people to perceive if they merely look for them. The Virginia election proved quite clearly that most Americans—at least at this point in their history—do not want to deal with the issue of subliminal manipulation. The press was also understandably reluctant to get into the issue, of course, because most newspapers, like other media in America, are careful not to compromise the ad agencies.

## A Subliminal Trigger

My research has encountered three specific techniques by which the word SEX is embedded, for unconscious perception, in print media. SEX is often painted on a photoengraving plate with asphaltum and the plate briefly immersed in acid. The word, usually in a mosaic (an interwoven series of SEXes), is lightly etched on the plate's surface. The etching technique is often utilized in photographs that must be published with little apparent retouching. Many magazines and newspapers use the technique on news pictures which help sell the publication.

A second frequently applied technique involves airbrushing SEX into a drawing or a photograph very lightly or painting it into hair, creases in clothing, facial lines, or rough background surfaces.

A third is to write numerous SEXes (mosaic) on a transparent overlay for a photograph or drawing. The overlay is photographed alone at high speed, say 1/2,000 of a second, and the overlay is double-exposed over an art layout at, say, 1/100 of a second. By varying speed and light, the SEX mosaics can be superimposed into any photograph at any intensity level desired.

In reviewing several thousand magazine covers, advertisements, news photographs, etc., eight embedded words have been discovered. Admittedly, this eight-word vocabulary of taboo words, such as SEX (by far, the most frequently utilized), CUNT, and FUCK, is not the most articulate form of verbal communication ever developed. Nevertheless, the technique does affect behavior. A surprisingly large amount of subliminal death symbolism is also utilized—skulls hidden in ice cubes, clouds, etc., the word DEATH or DETH often hidden in backgrounds.

During the evolutionary development of humans, subliminal perceptions were certainly involved with survival and adjustment. Creative innovators such as artists, poets, writers, and composers have utilized man's subliminal potentialities for many centuries. In at least one Rembrandt painting, for example, a hidden SEX appears. The seventeenth century Dutch word for SEX was SEKS, SEKSUAL, SEXES. The simplified SEX would have, in the popular idiom, meant

pretty much what it means today—sans Freud, Masters & Johnson, Kinsey, etc.

The use of subliminal techniques in print communication media has been going on in the United States at least since the World War I period. Norman Rockwell's first cover on The Saturday Evening Post during 1917 incorporated embedded SEXes. Furthermore, up to now, no one outside the trade even suspected what was going on. Whenever an embedded word or picture accidentally became consciously visible, the readers would pass it off as a joke, an accident, or a product of their imaginations.

Human perception of reality, at least in our society, depends heavily upon what our peers admit they perceive. And who would ever openly admit to perceiving such nonsense? What is "real," therefore, is often the product of consensus rather than of an individual's critical, autonomous perceptual evaluation. This may turn out to be man's most vulnerable Achilles' heel.

### SEX Can Also Be Crunchy

Ritz crackers, which are baked and distributed under licensing agreements with Nabisco in a dozen nations, offer purchasers much more than merely a crunchy eating experience.

Take half a dozen crackers out of the box and line them up on the table, face upward. Now relax, and let your eyes linger on each cracker—one at a time. Do not strain to see the surface, however. Usually in about ten seconds, you will perceive the message. Embedded on both sides of each cracker is a mosaic of SEXes (see Figure 4).

The number and precise location of each SEX embed appear to depend upon the temperature and time during which each cracker was baked. The SEXes are apparently embedded in the molds pressing out the dough. When baked, the SEX patterns vary slightly from cracker to cracker.

There is probably nothing uniquely evil about using embedded SEX mosaics on soda crackers. In all fairness, embedding really makes the damned things taste better. Visual stimuli, it should be clear by now, are an aspect of taste or flavor sensation. No single sense can be isolated in any per-

## The Commercial Appropriation of the Unconscious

ceptual situation. Multisensory media response is not a new concept in communication theory, nor is synesthesia, stimulating one sensory response via another sense in a crossover effect.

The idea of SEX-embedded Ritz crackers, however, does produce a rather uncomfortable situation when you consider the multitude of men and women all of us have known who seriously argued the quality of crackers, a preferred beer or cigarette brand, an automobile, etc.

SEX embeds, which at first appear to be crude jokes, have quite profound behavioral implications. The effects upon society of intense, long-term bombardment of subliminal stimuli have been completely ignored by social and behavioral scientists. This is strange, especially as a large body of philosophical and experimental evidence demonstrates that subliminal devices have powerful effects upon human memory. The memory can be theoretically modeled with at least two (many would be more likely) levels—one servicing the conscious or cognitive mechanisms, the other servicing the subliminal or unconscious.

Hypnosis has frequently been a productive technique of investigating subliminal phenomena and the level of awareness variously described as the unconscious. Narco-synthesis—sodium amytal and other drugs—has also been utilized with varying degrees of success. A wide range of studies, from those done with hypnosis to work such as that of Canadian neurosurgeon Dr. Wilder Penfield, indicates that the unconscious memory is prodigious. Hypnotic regressions have retrieved minute data on events consciously forgotten—events, Bay, from early childhood. Hypnotic experiments clearly suggest that at this unconscious level, each individual has an eidetic (photographic) memory potential.

Emotionally loaded or taboo words like SEX, perceived subliminally appear to firmly fix themselves and their related content in this unconscious memory system.

The retentive capacity of such a drive and emotion-related subliminal perception is astounding. Such embedded stimuli can be retained in the unconscious memory for very extended periods—possibly throughout life.

The relationship between subliminal stimuli and posthypnotic suggestions was recognized as early as 1917 by Dr. Otto

Poetzle, a Viennese physician. The Poetzle, or Alarm Clock, Effect demonstrates the power of a "sub" to evoke behavioral response when certain conscious relationships occur, long after the initial percept of the subembedded stimuli. For example, a subembedded ad for a specific gin brand might never be consciously recalled. But several weeks after having perceived the ad, the reader might opt for that particular brand without ever consciously realizing the basis for his decision.

Further, when the sub is consciously perceived, a conscious memory fix appears to be established—quite possibly for a lifetime.

### Memory Fixing

When this author and his students began collecting examples of media (advertising, etc.) containing subembeds, each example was carefully recorded in card files. After several months, however, it was discovered that once the subembedded ad was consciously perceived, the example was never forgotten. Our collection of subliminally embedded media on slides now numbers well over a thousand. The original researchers, while reviewing material collected as long as five years ago, immediately recall the subembeds and precise circumstances that led to their original discovery. Many of these examples required weeks of analysis before their subliminal embeds were discovered. The Jantzen ad (Fig. 1) required several weeks of study before all the subliminal details emerged. But once subs are consciously apparent, they appear to become a permanent part of the conscious memory system.

Though data is still limited to seventeen verifiable cases, a startling long-term subliminal stimuli effect upon conscious memory was uncovered. During the mid-1930s, Life magazine published a black-and-white photograph of a then popular young movie starlette. The photo depicted the young woman posed in a strapless evening gown. A subliminal embed had been airbrushed into skin wrinkles and shadows under her armpit in the portrait. By blocking off the area of her bent arm, and turning the picture on its side, a picture of a female genital area and two shapely legs appeared. The hidden detail was publicly discussed at the time—probably

## The Commercial Appropriation of the Unconscious

leaked by the Life publicity offices. Officially, Life rationalized the embed as a product of the readers' dirty minds.

This author has encountered seventeen individuals in various places throughout North America who clearly remembered the picture. Most could identify the year it was published and the name of the actress. The conscious recall of one page out of Life—a seemingly innocuous page at that—after some thirty-five years is remarkable to say the least.

The significance of subliminal stimuli in human behavior has been exhaustively tested in eight different experimental contexts. Subliminals have been demonstrated to affect dreams, memory, adaptation levels, conscious perception, verbal behavior, emotional responses, drive-related behavior, and perceptual thresholds.

This unconscious provides attitudinal frames or basic perspectives or a cultural bias through which our consciously perceived data is evaluated. If you wish to modify behavior, for example, you must somehow penetrate and manipulate this unconscious structure—such is the work of psychoanalysis, advertising, literature, art, and music. Advertising's significance, for example, has very little to do with conscious perception. The last thing most manufacturers would want a consumer to do is evaluate their products consciously and objectively.

In individual terms, however, the technology sells—programs into the brain—much, much more such as ideas, concepts, fantasies, the basic attitudinal frames for both human personality and relationships. American media, utilizing subliminal techniques, has evolved into a massive behavior modification system. It is curious that psychologist B.F. Skinner never realized that his behavior conditioning system of stimulus-response-reward was a working reality of American life in the mass communication media. However, the system that he thought theoretically capable of producing a Utopian millennium for mankind has some manipulative twists to it he never anticipated. The magnitude and creative ingenuity of this behavior modification system—which has been going on around us for years—was completely missed by Skinner and by so many others who neglected to look critically into the "real" world.

## Adaptation-Level Value Systems

In terms of behavior modification, perhaps the most significant of the demonstrable effects of subliminal stimuli involves adaptation-level theory, which can be briefly illustrated by taking two polarized verbal values such as light and heavy on, say, a nine-point scale. A pictorial stimuli is then shown any group and they are asked to evaluate the weight of the object shown—say, a loaf of bread. The "adaptation level" or "anchor point" would be the position on the scale a particular group (occupational, demographic, psychographic, etc.) would tend to select as their most common evaluation. For example, watchmakers likely have a somewhat different perceptual agreement on weight (anchor point) in relation to heavy and light than would a heavy construction crane operator.

In a long series of experiments, the ability of subliminal stimuli to change anchor points was established in relation to sound, weight, electric shocks, and visual size. Most of these experiments utilized tachistoscopic displays—a high-speed still projector (1/3,000 per second) that flashes invisibly over, say, a motion picture being projected. No evidence suggests significant differences between tachistoscopically induced subliminal stimuli and that induced via other visual or auditory illusions or embedding techniques. The high speed subliminal tachistoscope and several other subliminal induction devices were patented in 1962 and 1966 by Dr. Hal Becker of the Tulane Medical School.

It is not at all improbable that under intensive, repetitive, and long-term subliminal bombardment, entire value systems could be rearranged. Moving from adaptation-level anchor points for loud vs. soft, heavy vs. light, weak shock vs. heavy shock, and large vs. small to anchor points for good vs. bad, moral vs. immoral, beautiful vs. ugly, and sane vs. insane is an unsettling though quite reasonable extension of easily demonstrated laboratory technology. Marshall McLuhan commented that, "1984 happened about 1930, only we just never noticed."

In the Ritz cracker example, the hidden SEX would be unconsciously perceived, thus adding emotional significance to the cracker's value. It could also connect this symbolic

## The Commercial Appropriation of the Unconscious

value to an individual's unconscious sex drive—one of the strongest of human drive systems. The sexualization of persons, drinks, food, money, and other objects should be very carefully studied as it would ultimately change human behavior on a vast scale.

Since American media, through the use of subliminal embedding, has sexualized virtually everything that is advertised or presented in media, the sexualization of food is perhaps the ultimate triumph. According to the U.S. National Council on Health, roughly sixty percent of U.S. citizens are presently overweight.

As students of subliminal phenomena began to grasp the wide extent of the phenomena in American life, they have often asked if there is anything within the culture that does not ultimately relate to SEX. Even death and violence are heavily associate with SEX.

Consider the values consciously ascribed to human relationships, which are often evaluated in terms of sex and death, often involving various forms of self destruction. The problem is easily apparent—and frightening—especially as our perceptual defenses hide much of the phenomenon's significance from conscious awareness.

Economist John Kenneth Galbraith, among others, has pointed out that large corporations cannot afford to compete with one another. Their survival is predicated upon cooperation and market segmentation. In a truly competitive system someone stands to lose. If General Motors, for example, were to lose, Ford would also. American big business has finally learned that everybody has to protect everybody else's investment. This is even more ominous when you consider that by 1980, seventy percent of the productive capacity in the non-Communist world will be controlled by 200 corporations. These giant corporations, with their huge yearly media expenditures, are literally in control of American culture and its value systems. In 1974, U.S. ad expenditures totaled \$26.7 billion, in 1975 \$28.3 billion, and 1976 volume might top \$31 billion. Most of this advertising utilized subliminal techniques. These are not merely a few advertisements, but a mind-bending media saturation of the society.

# The Gay Playboy's Penthouse

Since man lies to himself even more than to others, the psychologists should draw conclusions from what people really mean, rather than from what they say or do.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE  
Thus Spoke Zarathustra

## Nobody Is Doing It

American media publishes and broadcasts endlessly about sexual permissiveness. The sad reality, however, seems to be that this hypersexuality is at best only a fantasy, merely another flimflam illusion of merchandising technology.

Current data available on American family life—an academic euphemism for sex life—portray the United States as a sexual wasteland. W. H. Masters and Virginia Johnson estimated conservatively that half of North American families are sexually dysfunctional. Theodore Lidz, head of psychiatry at the Yale Medical School, estimated that sexual dysfunction afflicts up to 75 percent of American families. In a society interminably preoccupied with sex in everything it touches, no one appears to be getting very much.

Psychologist Rollo May commented recently that when Dr. Alfred Kinsey published his famous study of male sexuality in 1948, about 3 percent of adult males appeared to have

## The Gay Playboy's Penthouse

some problem with impotence. Current studies, Dr. May explained, reveal that over 30 percent of adult males now may have problems with impotence.

In a survey, several hundred young people were asked who they privately considered the most sexually permissive group in American society—the over-thirties or the under-thirties? Almost unanimously they replied the over-thirties. Older adults were similarly questioned. Unanimously they replied the under-thirties.

Simply put, almost everyone in America appears to believe someone else is getting it all. Many attempts to study the sexual behavior of young Americans have resulted in the same general conclusions—only a minority can be described as permissive or promiscuous. Repeated studies in college co-ed dormitories, where young men and women freely mixed, showed that usually less than 5 percent were sexually indulgent. Those who paired off, lived together, or sexually played the field usually left the co-ed dormitories very soon. Many were actually forced to leave. After their initial fantasy expectations diminished, most of these so-called "swinging" dorm residents assumed what could be described as a brother-sister relationship.

Sexuality is threatening to the American young because of the restraints on individual freedom that are ultimately demanded by the sexual partner, and because of the intimacy that is eventually required. Ironically, intimacy is highly threatening to the lonely and alienated—a fearsome prospect today unless safely projected into the fantasy world of media. The young Playboy-oriented male attempts to substitute sex or physical intimacy for deeper involvements and commitments. His search for meaning and satisfaction in human relationships often involves only images of persons—not persons themselves.

Like most heavily repressed cultures, Americans have strong sexual vulnerabilities. Sexual interpretations are made of virtually all human interrelationship phenomena we do not understand or wish to openly deal with. Almost any subject can be totally dismissed by simply labeling it—Oedipal, oral, perverse, deviant, etc. One problem in talking so much about sex is that talking, like labeling, is an avoidance technique. In past epochs, a father might have taken his son to a local bor-

## MEDIA SEXPLOITATION

dello where he could be introduced to the so-called mysteries of life by a skilled (and hopefully patient) prostitute. Today, American fathers are far more likely to purchase a Playboy subscription for their sons as an introduction to life's mysteries. They cannot be infected with venereal disease by a magazine, but they will learn little about human sexual realities from masturbating with embedded pictures of nude models.

Americans are drenched in symbolic sexualization from their media virtually from birth. Many young readers, trapped in the infantile Playboy syndrome, elevate these pictorial illusions into icons with near religious significance. Much like Konrad Lorenz's ducks, imprinted with a human figure they took for their mother—American men are imprinted with sex object fantasies—the illusion often becoming fan more real than the real thing. Masters and Johnson discovered that American men and women who achieved orgasm by masturbation from fantasy or pictorial stimuli experienced much more intense and fulfilling climaxes than through actual heterosexual coitus. There is strong reason to suspect that the intensity of American's fantasy-provoked orgasm is unique and a product of media conditioning.

After his thorough training to view women as sex objects, the media-oriented young American male finds it most difficult to relate or interact with women as human beings. If the only real function in a man's or woman's life is to serve as a, useful sex object, then a man's and woman's value, usefulness, and significance to each other will be short-lived. The vernacular terms used m America to describe sexual communication, the most beautiful, sensitive, and intimate relationship experienced throughout life, are crude, hard, male-aggressive verbs—"to fuck," "to knock up," "to screw," "to lay," "to make," etc. They are more like those words directed toward conquered and enslaved enemies than toward, those with whom loving relationships are shared.

### Casualty Rates Increase

Best-selling author Gay Tatese, in a July 1975 Esquire article, documented a Chicago man's sixteen-year masturbatory affair

## The Gay Playboy's Penthouse

with a nude photo portrait from a 1957 photography magazine. The photograph included subliminal techniques.

Interviews with a dozen clinical psychologists and psychiatrists quickly revealed the Chicago man's experience was not at all unique. Many American males appear to obtain more intense gratification from subliminally embedded photographs of women than with the "real" thing. Sometimes the fixation focuses upon a single photograph, often several photographs, which may endure for years, but most often the addiction involves an endless succession of fantasy sex partners collected and discarded from month to month in what was described as an "American's harem." Cheesecake art, considered as harmless entertainment, has addictive potentialities when embedded with subliminal devices. Indeed, Playboy and its ilk have changed American sexual mores in far more bizarre ways than their profit-obsessed editors ever guessed.

Male sexuality superiority may be one of the basic mythologies of Western civilization. Consider that virtually any average female is physically capable of at least a dozen orgasms every twenty-four hours. She can repeat this performance three or four times weekly without ill effects. To bury the myth even deeper, each woman is easily capable, physiologically and emotionally, of servicing the sexual tensions of at least half a dozen men. So why has the mythology of male sexual superiority been sustained by the economic, political, social, and religious institutions of Western societies? And what of the American woman who depends upon the media for her orientation toward life?

Her life as a sex object is predicated upon her body's ability to compare favorably with that of an immature child. Women are carefully trained by media to view themselves as inadequate. They are taught that other women—through the purchases of clothes, cosmetics, food, vocations, avocations, education, etc.—are more desirable and feminine than themselves. Her need to constantly reverify her sexual adequacy through the purchase of merchandise becomes an overwhelming preoccupation, profitable for the merchandisers, but potentially disastrous for the individual.

A woman's usefulness as a mere fantasy fulfillment of male sexual expectations is necessarily limited. Under these rules, sexual fulfillment rapidly diminishes. Female obsolescence is

a very prevalent event in American family life. The moment a woman's body and skin matures, she is headed socially downhill—and sometimes very rapidly. North American statistics show that divorce around the age of forty is a highly predictable event. Usually the male remarries a younger woman, while the aging female is most often headed for loneliness and sexual ostracism through the remaining half of her life.

### The Normal Neurosis

North American society has a vested interest in reinforcing an individual's failure to achieve sexual maturity. By exploiting unconscious fears, forcing them to repress sexual taboos, the media guarantees blind repressed seeking for value substitutes through commercial products and consumption. Sexual repression, as reinforced by media, is a most viable marketing technology.

One of the most important findings on both major studies on human sexuality by Masters and Johnson was a reaffirmation that the sexual attitudes that influence and condition us through life are subliminally—not consciously—induced from the environment, most especially from the family and home. This finding would certainly include advertising media as an integrated part of the American family and home environment. For example, it doesn't really make much difference how a parent, school system, or government may attempt to instruct, or avoid instructing, young people about sex. They unconsciously learn from the world around them, and such subliminal "learning" is far more persuasive than any consciously-perceived sermon or brochure.

In other words, those things going on around us that we take for granted and consciously ignore form the basis for most value systems and human interrelationships. The most significant of these subliminal perceptions are derived from high-credibility sources, of which the public communication media are among the most virulent and far-reaching.

Advertising creates a massive subliminal environment where men and women appear most frequently in fantasy relationships designed to enhance or optimize the mass audience's consuming orientation. We have, of course, made the

illusionary media world the real or natural world, permitting the actual material environment to become quite pale, insipid, and ordinary by comparison.

Sexually insecure males would probably have great difficulty in admitting that a woman's breasts symbolized maternal security and comfort. Most men would more comfortably express themselves as, "Breasts turn me on, excite me." This statement would appear to their self-image as masculine, virile, and safe.

One of the earlier, ingenious appeals to doubts over sexual identity and to latent maternal conflicts appeared on the April 1967 Playboy cover (see Figure 5). The cover model is attractive but, strangely, lacks overt sexual appeal. The background figure appears—at first glance—to be masculine, while the foreground model appears to be a young woman in a masculine costume sitting at the feet of her master, presumably the playboy. It is, of course, this first glance that sold the magazine on the newsstands. Now, let's look more carefully at it with much the same care that must have been used by the photographer for this important illustration.

Several details involving sexuality appear not quite as they should be—the kind of incongruity to which unconscious perception is peculiarly sensitive. The model's face is curious—not one line, shadow, dimple, or wrinkle is shown. The outlines of the face are sharp—on each side and under the chin. The face seems flat and one-dimensional,

The cover was tested with half a dozen individuals in a deep trance level of hypnosis. Each identified the face as a mask. Several mentioned that the eyes appeared detached from the face, as though they were peering through from behind.

The straight, coarse hair is obviously a wig. This was again strange, since Playboy cover models, considering the cover's merchandising significance, are most precisely cosmetized and the final photograph is carefully retouched. There is never a hair out of place, and even the most subtle expression or complexion details are finely engineered. The model's masculine cap brim further shadows her eyes. When eyes are in shadow, the artist is often suggesting that the subject has a secret.

An examination of the white shirt shows that the female

breast line is missing. The creases are merely folds—a strange inconsistency in a magazine famed for its exaggerated portrayal of the female bosom. The ubiquitous Playboy rabbit logo is embedded in the sleeve with the rabbit's nose just below and to the right of the model's right elbow. One rabbit ear goes up the sleeve while the other appears in the fold diagonally across the shirt front

The masculine polka-dot necktie, a phallic symbol, is held very gently, caressingly, in the model's right hand. If you look at the wrist and little finger positions, the left hand is pressing with considerable force against the background model's leg. A list of possible emotions being felt by the blond model was given a group of test subjects unfamiliar with subliminal techniques. Over a third of "the responses centered around "slight fear" and "apprehension." The remaining responses were scattered widely across a dozen possible reactions.

### Behind the Mask and Under the Wig

Who is hiding behind the mask and under the blond wig? There are only two possibilities—a boy or a girl. There would be no apparent reason for a girl to disguise herself as a girl which leaves open the other possibility of a boy hiding in a girl's costume.

However, if the model is a boy disguised as a girl, it is doubtful he would seek protection by running to his father. American fathers take a dim view of their sons dashing about in women's clothing. This brings into question the background figure, which at first glance appeared to be the trimly masculine figure of the playboy.

Three large men's clothing store chains were checked for horizontally striped men's pants. None were available, nor had the stores' buyers ever heard of horizontally striped men's pants. Even the so-called unisex clothing stores had never stocked, in the memory of their oldest employees men's slacks with horizontal stripes.

At least up to 1974, men's slacks had never utilized horizontal stripes—women's slacks, yes, but never men's. The problem of the belt buckles was also curiously discrepant on a magazine cover famous for precise symbolic details. Men's

belt buckles are usually square, women's usually round. This clue suggested, again, the cover figure's sexuality had been symbolically reversed.

The male in the picture is, therefore, hiding in a girl's costume. The female is standing in the background. Who, then, might be this background female? Small male children often assume this position with their mothers when threatened by their fathers. Many writers on child behavior have commented that children achieve solace and security with their heads near their mother's genital area. Children find their mother's genital odors tranquilizing and pacifying.

The genital area in this cover, however, is carefully guarded by the Playboy logo in the belt buckle. Our young frightened playboy is literally surrounded by the logo—one in back on the belt buckle and one in front on the shut.

Boy children, when frightened, also frequently hold on to their penises—symbolized in the illustration as a phallic necktie.

The detailed analysis of this logo as a symbol of paternal castration fear, with its scissorlike ears, was included in my earlier book Subliminal Seduction. This earlier work also probed in greater detail, Playboy's use of symbolic mothers and small infants in their cover designs. Out of roughly thirty Playboy covers analyzed, over 70 percent had some symbolic maternal representation included. The mother was always in some form of close relationship with a symbolic, often a nursing, infant.

On the cover we've just been discussing, the colors black and white reflect a clear-cut male and female gender differentiation. Only the golden belt buckles, the blond hair, and the flesh-colored skin are unnaturally colored. All these human details (hair and skin) turned out to be fake. The hands, incidentally, appeared to be male. A short fingernail appears on the right forefinger holding the tie. The long fingernails on the left hand, however, had been retouched. A careful examination of the finger outlines reveals they are quite irregular—obviously another retouch job.

The Playboy reader's unresolved Oedipal conflicts have simply been put to the service of circulation-building and advertising-selling. What the reader sees subliminally, but cer-

## MEDIA. SEXPLOITATION

tainly not at the conscious level, is what he gets. But we will never know for certain whether this is really what he wants.

### Role Consistency

American men unconsciously place rigid restrictions upon touching each other. When it happens, it must be made to appear an accident. Virtually any male American can be made intensely uncomfortable if touched or patted during a conversation. In Tanzania and other African cultures, it is a common practice for men to hold hands while talking. In Latin or Arabic cultures, close physical proximity between men is still considered quite normal—even socially desirable. But it is amusing to simply move close, without any actual physical contact, to an American at a cocktail party. Perceiving the threat of physical contact, most American men will move away. They can literally be steered all over a room by simply edging closer to them during a conversation. Usually, they soon crack under the strain and make some excuse to terminate the conversation and leave for less threatening companionship.

It is certainly not my intention here to laugh at any individual's weaknesses, sensitivities, or fears, but to examine deeply those things that surround us each moment of each day and unquestionably condition and manipulate us.

### The Silver Queen

The January 1973 edition of Out magazine, published by the Playboy organization, displayed a beautiful blond model dressed in a silver brassiere and miniskirt. Considering the blatant pornography regularly published in the so-called men's magazines, there was nothing remarkable on the surface about this Out cover (see Figure 6).

However, several researchers studying the cover became quite uncomfortable, though they could not at first clearly articulate their feelings. Before reading further, you should study this Oui cover and attempt to assess your own feelings. What appears to be going on in the illustration?

A recent study by The New York Times disclosed that cover designs could affect newsstand sales of a publication as

## The Gay Playboy's Penthouse

much as 35 percent. Playboy, for example, sells about 75 percent of its over 6 million copies monthly on newsstands and about 25 percent by subscription. As Oui had been on the market for only four months at the time of the Silver Queen issue, virtually 100 percent of its circulation—claimed by the magazine in excess of a million copies—was newsstand-originated. The cover is by far the most important page in this publication. And the subliminal cover story should tell us something highly significant about the motives of the young readers being editorially engineered to purchase the publication.

The Silver Queen cover portrait was compared with male and female physiology text descriptions in a medical school library. Five specific anatomical details supported the hypothesis that their blond model was actually a man in drag.

The model's wrists, shoulders, neck, fingernails, and breasts are strongly and clearly male. In addition, the blond hair is a wig. Some curious changes were airbrushed into the photograph, suggesting that the artists and editors knew precisely what they were doing. Male navels, for example, appear to be horizontal and the female appear vertical due to a layer of fatty tissue women usually carry just below their navel. Microscopic examination of the photoengraving revealed the navel had been carefully airbrushed into a vertical appearance.

Nearly fifty male college students who had purchased at least one copy of Oui were then interviewed. The questionnaire began, "Would you like to date the blond model on this cover? Where would you take her? What would you order for dinner? What would you talk about? Would you dance with her? Would you park on the way home? Would she invite you up to her apartment?" etc., etc., etc. Had these interviewed students even suspected what was going on, the interviewers would have been in serious trouble.

### Where a Man's a ... (?)

All the questions, nevertheless, were answered in detail by each respondent as they fantasized themselves on an exciting date with the silver blond. Surprisingly, not one of the young men even suspected there might be something queer, if you

will pardon the expression, about the Out cover. These young men appeared so entranced by the high-credibility image of Out that they repressed their perceptual ability to differentiate sexual gender.

It does not appear reasonable to assume that so important a page in a prestigious national men's magazine would be used as simply a crude joke, ridiculing its readers' masculinity. If the joke were discovered, the magazine would obviously be in trouble. Nor did it appear reasonable that the magazine was trying to build circulation among male homosexuals, who are estimated at roughly 3 percent of the American adult male population. Besides, few advertisers would want their products identified with homosexuality, at least not at the conscious level. The transvestite cover was clearly designed to appeal to the latent homosexuality presumably inherent in all males at the unconscious level. In several other world cultures, homosexuality is not considered a taboo subject, but latent homosexuality has a substantial potentiality for subliminal manipulation in American culture, which consciously demands a strict adherence to clear-cut heterosexual divisions.

Note, however, that the face of the model is not animated or enticing. "She" actually appears to be waiting somewhat ill at ease, looking into the middle distance. The miniskirt appears to be a cage of wire netting over the genital area, and the hands rest on it uncomfortably, as if "she" would prefer to be rid of it. The anxiety of repressed homosexual feelings is effectively dramatized.

Of course, the Out silver queen was not the only example of media utilizing repressed sexual identity reversals as a marketing technique. Playboy has utilized the approach many times over the years, but only infrequently on covers and as a subliminal trigger in ads and illustrations. Latent homosexuality has become a frequently utilized subliminal management device in advertising.

One intriguing aftermath of the experiment was a small survey conducted among fifteen female college students. They were asked a series of simple questions about what kind of personality they thought the cover model would have. Very quickly, about half of the young women consciously identified the model's male sexuality.

## "Playboy" Meets "Playgirl"

In February 1973 Douglas Lambert—a Los Angeles publisher—launched a new marketing concept for advertisers with Playgirl. The first press run included an ambitious 600,000 copies. By mid-1974 the publication was selling in excess of 2 million copies monthly—one of the most successful of the crotch publications. The magazine was widely publicized as aimed at the "new American woman." By November 1974 Playgirl bragged of being the fifth largest women's magazine in America.

So, faced with this overwhelming success in both circulation and advertising sales, we asked the simple question, "What kind of girls read Playgirl?"

It is widely known in the trade that out of the 25 to 30 million readers of Playboy magazine, about 20 percent are women—but usually the wives or girl friends of the male Playboy purchasers. By themselves, very few women purchase Playboy or any of the other men's magazines.

After interviewing proprietors in roughly forty magazine retail stores throughout the Midwest, only three could recall ever selling a copy of Playgirl to a girl or woman. Boys and men were apparently purchasing the magazine with ferocious intensity, but the very few women purchasers anyone could recall appeared to have purchased out of casual curiosity.

Many stores knew their regular male purchasers; none could recall a regular female purchaser of Playgirl. The phenomenon was unprecedented in American publishing. A major national magazine was—with heavy fanfares—announcing itself as a women's magazine, but was apparently purchased only by men.

Playgirl's unique contribution was the nude male photographs and centerfolds. In every issue featured photographs were nude, young American males romping gleefully through some form of healthful outdoor activity with their exposed genitalia flapping impressively in the wind. And, these male genitalia were impressive. Dr. R. L. Dickinson's *Atlas of Human Sex Anatomy*, a standard work used in medical schools, reports the normal range of flaccid penis length varies between roughly 3 3/8 and 4 1/8 inches, with the general average in roughly the 3 3/4-inch range. In research conducted

by Masters and Johnson, full erection usually doubled the organ's length over its flaccid state size. There appeared some variation, however, as larger flaccid organs increase somewhat less in the erect state.

Genitals portrayed in Playgirl were, at the time of the study, pictured only in flaccid state. The models used by the publication, however, must have been carefully screened. In examining several issues, the flaccid exposed penises consistently appeared to exceed six inches in length. It was not difficult to imagine the modeling agencies listing on their male clients' application forms "flacid penis size," much as they list the sizes of female models' mammary glands.

When you consider the detailed scientific statistics that have been compiled on male penis size for whites (and blacks, though it may surprise you that there is no difference), Playgirl must maintain a rigorous recruiting effort to find male models with abnormally long, flaccid penis dimensions. They appear to be using models who represent about 3 to 5 percent of the male adult population. Assuming male models are statistically representative of the total male population, this means that out of every one hundred models interviewed, ninety-five to ninety-eight must be rejected for undersized endowments.

### Kinsey Perceived Something Else

According to Playgirl's promotional logic, women—at least the "new women"—find these photographs appealing and presumably a source of sexual stimulation. But Dr. Kinsey and his associates at Indiana University made some interesting discoveries in their famous 1953 study, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. The late Dr. Kinsey wrote, "Photographs of female nudes and magazines exhibiting nude or near-nude females are produced primarily for the consumption of males. There are, however, photographs and magazines portraying nude and near-nude males, but these are also produced for the consumption of males. There are almost no male or female nudes ... produced for the consumption of females."

"The failure," Dr. Kinsey continued, "of nearly all females to find erotic arousal in such portrayals is so well known to the distributors of nude photographs and nude magazines that

## The Gay Playboy's Penthouse

they have considered that it would not be financially profitable to produce such material for a primarily female audience."

The centerfold in the June 1974 issue of Playgirl displayed the former pro-football player Lou Zivkovich in the buff. The issue sold well over 2 million copies. Most of the crotch publications have roughly 3.5 readers per copy, so the total readership of this issue would be roughly 7 million, most of whom Playgirl claims are women. America's leading advertisers at first appeared shy about the "new woman" concept, but have lately been surging forward to climb upon the sex-game bandwagon.

Viva, published by famed Penthouse publisher Robert Guccione, launched a counterattack in September 1973 to the Playgirl invasion. Guccione described his magazine, Viva, as "edited by men who truly love women . . . for women who truly love men." Like Playgirl, the most notable quality of Viva is its displays of male genitalia.

By mid-1974 Viva had reached a most respectable 700,000 circulation which provided their advertisers with a pool of roughly 2.5 million readers. Even though his circulation was smaller, Guccione appeared to have outdone Playgirl in seeking out male models with large flaccid penises. Guccione explained how this made advertisers approach Viva with caution. "They're pretty uptight about its pictures of nude men," he admitted almost compassionately. Apparently referring to the jealousy that Viva must elicit from less well hung males whose girl friends are regular Viva readers, Guccione played the game all the way through. "Guys," he said, "naturally like their women to believe that they're well built," as though this were something guys could keep secret from gals.

In a survey of magazine store proprietors, similar to that done on Playgirl, investigators were unable to find any dealer who recalled ever selling a copy of Viva to a female. Copies of both Playgirl and Viva were shown to a sample of young women on a midwestern university campus. Interviewers were female students, carefully selected and trained to present the two magazines during the interviews as women's publications. They were specifically trained to display enthusiasm toward the magazines during all interviews and to solicit as much female support for the publications as was possible. They were

even offered small rewards for each verifiable supporter of the publication's concept they could produce. In other words, a favorable bias toward the magazine was built into both the questionnaire and the interviewers.

In over a hundred interviews with female university students, the female interviewers could persuade less than 5 percent into a positive attitude toward the two publications. A few respondents, roughly 10 percent, appeared extremely annoyed at the "sexist," "degrading," "insulting" portrayal of women as "malleable," "inert," pieces of "disposable furniture," in the pictorial art of both publications.

### Male Fantasies Differ From Female Fantasies

Most female respondents, roughly 85 percent, saw the publications as some kind of a joke. They appeared more indifferent than anything else. In answer to whether they would purchase the magazines, over 95 percent said most emphatically no. Of those who said they might purchase one issue, none would commit to two or more. In answer to the final question, "What kind of girl reads Playgirl?" most respondents said they did not know or could not be certain. Roughly 15 percent replied with answers such as "a weirdo," "a prostitute," "a pervert," "a freak," etc. The magazine's image projection was so strangely negative to the female respondents that even those who thought they might purchase a copy commented in negative terms.

In one of the Kinsey researchers' case studies, the showing of nude male figures to 4,191 men disclosed that 54 percent were erotically aroused by photographs, drawings, and paintings of nude males. By comparison, from a sample of 5a 678 females, only 12 percent were aroused as a result of viewing male or female nudes.

In a further Kinsey study of 617 females who had observed photographs of male genitalia, 21 percent reported definite and/or frequent erotic response and 27 percent some response; 52 percent reported they had never been aroused by viewing male genitals. This final study was done with sexually mature women.

It would be a serious mistake to view Playgirl and Viva as publications designed for homosexuals. Again, the appeal is

to latent homosexuality, which, to some degree, involves every male.

There appears to be a latent, deeply repressed, homosexual potentiality in all males, some more than others, of course. The Kinsey data can be considered conservative, since male respondents had to admit openly their arousal by photographs, drawings, and paintings of nude males.

While Playboy occasionally dabbled in the playground of sexual role anxieties, Playgirl and Viva must be given credit for having turned Kinsey's interesting little observation into multimillion-dollar publishing empires. Virtually every issue of Playgirl and Viva carried at least one article strongly rationalizing male homosexuality.

### The Rationalization of Homosexuality

A review of specific Playgirl content is even more revealing. In the February-March 1973 issue, television's Hee Haw stars, the Hager brothers, appeared in the centerfold. One Hager stands behind a guitar which coyly hides his genitals. The other brother sat beside him, his genitals also hidden from the camera. The Hager brothers appeared to be hairless, probably the result of airbrushing the photograph. Their postures were clearly effeminate. Their jewelry also appeared quite inappropriate for males, and their smiles hardly reinforced any concept of masculinity. This was the magazine's more restrained first issue. By June, genitalia were in full display.

In the first issue an article titled "Don't Get Driven into Marriage" contains curious comments. The author, Miriam Gilbert (feminine first name, masculine second) emphasized, "There's no reason for you to be ashamed of being single," and that "Being single won't make you worry-free, but at least your problems won't be doubled and possibly tripled [a reference to pregnancy?]." Homosexuality, of course, offers a simple solution to all these vexing problems. Another statement by the author, "Marriage can tie you into knots," has similar implications. At the very least, married intimacy was presented as more trouble than it's worth; an escape into sex-object status is shown as the way out. This is a far cry from the primary theme of every other women's publication in

North America. Dr. Kinsey's study of the American male revealed, perhaps curiously in this context, that half the men who remained unmarried by the age of thirty-five were overtly homosexual.

In two other articles in this issue titled, "What a Woman Looks for in a Man (and What She Settled For)" and "How to Make a Play for a Playgirl," an appeal to male readers as well as clear rationalizations for male homosexuality are evident. Once again, females were portrayed as dumb and their expectations of what a man should be appeared absurd and ridiculous. The female is portrayed as a starry-eyed, romantic, naive fool. The article even advised the woman, "The cardinal rule, the backbone of the chase is: Be an idiot!"

### Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?

The underlying statement in all these articles advised male readers to avoid troublesome, silly females and richly enjoy the companionship of men. Fun is liberally poked at the "normal" male who is still vulnerable to females.

A justification for male homosexuality appeared in an interview with Jacqueline Susann in the October 1973 issue. "Where is the law that says men must marry women if they don't want to? Where is it written?" Susann asked. She also expressed her position loud and clear in behalf of homosexuality: "I'm all for it! I think it's highly civilized," citing ancient Greece, where it is alleged to have been "women for babies, men for love." Virtually any practicing homosexual will confirm with proselytizing enthusiasm the myth that Greece was the gayest of all countries. (Modern Greek men have been known to take a very dim view of such nonsense.)

Playgirl's cartoons invariably demean women, emphasizing their disloyalty, their undependability as sex objects (citing irregularities caused by menstruation and birth control pills) stupidity, selfishness, dominating tendencies; and superstition. Ads in Playgirl and Viva are also predominantly aimed at men. The ads that do appear to involve female products are displayed as gifts for dumb women who respond to bribes purchased by men.

Playgirl also printed a color portrait of a young woman

## The Gay Playboy's Penthouse

posed with sunglasses, dressed in a sleeveless blouse and simple skirt (see Figure 7). The caption reads simply, "What kind of girl reads Playgirl?" Though attractive, she did not appear as sexually provocative as other females portrayed in the magazine. Her dress was quite commonplace, hardly an inappropriate, exotic, sexually provocative costume for the erotic fantasies of a young American male. The reader, however, cannot see what she is thinking as her eyes remain obscured behind the sunglasses, suggesting she may have had a secret. As your eye drifts casually across the photographic surface, focus for thirty seconds upon the model's genital area. Embedded lightly on the model's blue skirt is a very large, erect penis (see Figure 8). What kind of girl, indeed, reads Playgirl?

### And—After Long-term Conditioning?

Playing around with the very insecure sexual identities of North American young males may have serious consequences. Someone should look carefully into the possible media imprinting, reinforcement, and legitimatization of homosexual perspectives. Even though libido-imprinting involves every male in the world to one degree or another, a search of scientific literature revealed the subject had rarely been researched. Since magazines like Playgirl and Viva are widely used as stimuli for early masturbatory practices by young men, it might be useful to consider the possible long-term effects of an alienation toward women subliminally induced and reinforced by these and similar media.

At this moment, the possible imprinting effects of homosexual influences through masturbatory stimuli can only be speculated upon. Much like the specific cause-and-effect link between smoking and lung cancer, they may be difficult to isolate concretely and demonstrate to everyone's total satisfaction, especially because the culture has a vested interest in not perceiving such a relationship.

This does not mean, however, the relationship does not exist. It simply means that we do not as yet have sensitive enough instruments capable of isolating the precise number of homosexual stimuli that will produce a full-fledged queen.

Much of North American so-called social science—often antisocial and quite unscientific in its methods and illusions—is devoted to proving that things do not exist. Quite often these things proven not to exist have been subjects the society has a vested interest in avoiding.

Masters and Johnson, after their extensive research into Human Sexual Inadequacy, blamed the lack of strong, positive self-images as the basic cause of sexual dysfunction in both men and women. Writers such as Abraham Maslow, Sigmund Freud, Karl Menninger, Orrin Klapp, and dozens of others have dealt in great depth with the lifelong significance to every individual of self-image concepts. All agree in one measure or another that a fundamental aspect of self-image is sexual gender identity—how individuals perceive themselves both alone and in comparison with others. Models, such as parental figures—or perhaps more importantly today in North America, communication media-induced models—form the base from which self-image is developed, especially with the young. The process of self-image construction, however, appears to be a dynamic process which continues throughout life.

In his book *The Collective Search for Identity*, sociologist Orrin Klapp referred to the American's problem of "identity despair," which has led some into suicide and other such self-destructive acts. Identity despair, however, is more likely to lead most people into what Thoreau called "quiet desperation," to which media offers heavy product consumption as an answer. Consumption as part of a search for psychological fulfillment is as lacking in hope as are brand-loyal cigarette smokers just after their diagnosis as lung-cancer victims.

After three years of matching male genitalia against Playgirl magazine, Viva finally decided to give up the game and go straight. Beginning with its March 1976 issue, Viva editor, Kathy Keeton announced publicly what most people in the business had known for years, as well as most women—"Women get turned on by personality, not physique. Viva will no longer use male frontal nudity in its pages."

At Play girl, however, the profitable reader manipulation continues. When queried on the Viva editorial policy change, editor Marin Scott reported "Playgirl will add more pages to

## MEDIA SEXPLOITATION

its centerfold, featuring full-color foldouts of naked men. Women," she added, "want to see more male nudes. They love it"

What kind of girls reads Playgirl, indeed?

# The Fashion Massage

The best way to get someone  
to be what one wants them  
to be is not to tell them what  
to be, but to tell them what  
they are.

R. D. LAING  
Politics of the Family

## Planned Psychological Obsolescence

The new synthetic fabrics simply do not wear out fast enough: it often requires months, even years, of continuous wear before synthetics even begin to show deterioration. With the growth of synthetic fabrics, it became almost a matter of survival for the textile industry to intensify fashion's significance.

The primary function of fashion is simply to sell clothing. The secondary function is to make obsolete all older, out-of-fashion clothing. Both the men's and the women's fashion industries are efficient—and highly profitable—systems of planned obsolescence for the multi-billion-dollar textile industry.

In 1968 you might have been one of millions of Americana to purchase a new tailored suit. Many new fabrics, including Italian silk, were popular. Linings that year were cheerfully designed and expensive—often made of silk satin. You could still obtain superb handcraftmanship if you could afford it.

## The Fashion Massage

Many men even foolishly let themselves be talked into taking an extra pair of pants with their suits.

By 1970 even the most expensive 1968 suit was obsolete, most not yet beginning to show wear. Any man would have been quite uncomfortable wearing the two-year-old suit even on a quick trip to the corner store. In just two years lapels had inched out about a half inch per year, the pants had slowly become more tightly fitted around the seat and legs—at the rate of about a half inch per year—and those obnoxious bell-bottomed flares were also inching out at about the same rate.

While these carefully programmed suit-design changes were being engineered, closets full of white shirts were also being obsoleted throughout America by the changeover to colored shirts. By 1971 a white shirt worn to a business conference would have made an executive feel like Calvin Coolidge at a Yippie convention. One Salvation Army officer even discouraged his contributors from donating white shirts during used-clothing drives: they were difficult even to give away to the poor. Meanwhile, across America, neckties became wider—a half inch per year—and belts also became wider, a quarter inch per year.

Any readers doubting the success of planned sartorial obsolescence can simply check their own closets for clothes, ties, shirts, belts, and whatever else they cannot bring themselves to throw out, even if they do not wear them anymore. If the cost of this waste was totaled each year for North America alone, it would easily finance a gourmet's diet for every starving famine victim on the earth's surface. And so far, we have only considered men's fashions.

The textile industry has been manipulating women along these same lines for many decades—often much more ruthlessly.

## A Positive Self-image Is Vital

Consider the American woman's self-image in relation to her bodily endowments—biologically derived proportions over which most individuals have little power to change or modify. Young women with small breasts, for example, are quite likely to perceive themselves as deficient in personal value.

## MEDIA SEXPLORATION

American media establish and sustain the cultural models of desirable human configurations. Women with heavy legs in America are also programmed almost automatically for a lifelong inferiority complex, as are generally larger, heavier women.

The techniques are perhaps more easily visible when other cultures are compared with North America. For example, many Latin American cultures idealize heavy women with heavy legs. Unfortunately, thin Latin American women when might win beauty prizes in North America are condemned to a lifelong sense of inferiority among their own people.

These phenomena apply more or less in all cultures. North American culture, however, can hammer artificial cultural norms deeply into the population's collective unconscious via media saturation.

Diets and other reducing techniques are a regular staple for every women's page or magazine in America. Every issue of *Cosmopolitan* features an article such as "Get Thin and Stay Thin." *Vogue* features an endless succession of articles such as "Underweight? A Fresh Look at the Problem" (as though a "fresh" look were really necessary). Had any of these fantasy schemes actually worked, the problem would have been solved and forgotten long ago. That, however would not have sold advertised products.

Advertisers of rich cake mixes, desserts, and other calories packed indulgences actually fight to place their colorful mouth-watering ads, loaded with subliminal triggers, in close proximity to articles on dieting and weight reduction.

Advertisers spend annual fortunes rinding out which techniques sell best. The various contradictions and inconsistencies add up to profitable merchandising strategies. Intense guilt feelings, communicated to both men and women about their body structures, produce heavy product consumers who attempt to compensate for their imagined biological deficiencies via the never-ending river of new products. The guaranteed failure of fantasy schemes for remaking the human body also guarantees further inferiority feelings, which often results in further depression, self-rejection, frustration—and, almost inevitably, increased consumption of high-caloried foods, clothing that promises to make one look slimmer, and a veritable potpourri of look-thin merchandise.

## The Fashion Massage

Women, perhaps even more than men, have been painstakingly programmed to feel inferior unless they are dressed appropriately. Costuming, of course, is essentially a matter of money. If you can afford exclusively designed clothes, you will be one of the best-dressed clothes horses in town. Social ascendancy in America is most often a prerogative of what you are wearing and how much it costs—in terms, however, of other people's abilities to assess that cost. Simply being expensive is not enough; the apparel and its design must appear expensive.

## The Ins and the Outs

Training in fashion dependence must begin young to assure lifelong servitude or dependence upon the industry that rales on what is in and what is out. Teen-agers and their high level of discretionary income (they can spend it for whatever they want) are primary targets of subliminal fashion media which include articles, so-called news, motion pictures and TV costuming, etc.

Young people look for models as they always have, but today they search for self-acceptance or identities among their peers rather than from within themselves. Psychopathological casebooks are loaded with evidence that this form of identity-seeking courts disaster.

Several years ago, fashion conditioning was also initiated among the pre-teen market. These young people are extremely vulnerable to the society around them as they grow through chemical and biological changes at puberty. They seek out confirmation when they ask, "How do I look?" or "What am I like?" Of course, friends usually accommodate—if they are interested in remaining friends. All media—newspapers, magazines, television, film, records—flatter our young relentlessly, paying court to their uncertain egos.

Narrow, tight-legged "pegged" trousers of several years ago are "camp," out of it, archaic throwbacks from an out-of-step past. During 1971 it was already almost impossible to purchase trousers with straight legs. For a short while, tailors did a brisk business of cutting off the flare for men who were annoyed at the teen-aged fashions creeping up to dominate the

## MEDIA SEXPLOITATION

adult world. Within a year, however, most surrendered—the extra tailoring was too expensive and time-consuming. Obedient, though often begrudgingly, men replaced their wardrobes with bell-bottomed pants and wide-lapeled coats.

Most American teen-agers today would not wear out-of-fashion clothing to cut their parents' lawns. But they are consciously unaware they have been carefully trained to fear a loss of image among their peer group. Teen-agers view themselves in a mirror with their bell-bottomed trousers as being in close step with the modern world. They have been trained to view themselves as socially acceptable because they dress appropriately. *I consume, therefore I exist* has become the basic maxim of the American young as they respond predictably to the subliminal value manipulations of the textile industry.

Bell-bottomed trousers are merely a designer's technique of obsoleting tens of millions of dollars in wearing apparel. The intensity and rapidity of these change cycles have been increased during the seventies. Several years from now, as sales volumes begin to decrease in response to the durability of synthetic fabrics, pants designs will move slowly back to narrow bottoms with more loose-fitting legs and seats.

### In the Jungles of Manhattan

There is a great deal of technique in fashion design carefully planned to provoke the unconscious. In a highly competitive industry, costume and accessory designers utilize every subliminal trick in the book to move their merchandise.

For example, a most curious parallel appears between the intricate designs on modern jewelry and textiles and man's tribal instinct for the expression of repressed cravings or needs. Among primitive peoples, facial and body painting confer upon the individual great dignity and value as a human being, aid them to cross the frontiers between nature and culture, differentiate the mindless animal from civilized man, and define men and women's social status. Body and facial painting motifs in primitive societies often parallel—in both meaning and psychological significance—the symbolic representations of modern merchandisers in the fashion industry.

## The Fashion Massage

One intricate and expensive jeweled costume necklace advertised in *Vogue* utilized a design strikingly similar to that recorded by anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss nearly fifty years ago in a Stone Age Caduveo Indian village in the Brazilian Amazon River basin (see Figures 9 and 10). The body-painting design motifs of the Caduveos are shown in the inset drawings taken from Dr. Levi-Strauss's book *Tristes Tropiques* (*Sad Tropics*).<sup>\*</sup> These designs had been carefully painted on the bodies and faces of Caduveo tribal royalty with fine bamboo spatulas dipped in genipapo juice, producing a color that turns blue-black after oxidation. The two-opened spiral designs were often used on the face and neck.

The Caduveo designs appear very consistent in style, technique, and inspiration. Recorded in drawings by two anthropologists—Boggiani and Levi-Strauss—who visited the tribes forty years apart, the tribal designs remained unchanged. The chain design on the left was recorded by Guido Boggiani in 1895, and the design on the right by Levi-Strauss in 1935 (see Figure 11).

The primitive Caduveo appear to repress the meanings of these designs. Though they had names (labels) for each design, they could not clearly explain the meanings. At the time, Levi-Strauss thought they were being secretive, though he wrote that the designs appeared motivated by some form of eroticism.

Another anthropologists, Jesuit missionary Father Sanchez-Labrador, detected the presence of the demon in these chain designs. Much like their modern North American counterparts, Caduveo women openly and systematically exploited the erotic effects of makeup. Caduveo women of high birth even plucked out their facial hairs.

Specific design meanings remained ambiguous and obscure within the tribes. Reminiscent of modern Americans, the Caduveos did not wish to talk about meanings. Necklace and wrist decorations in the form of tattooed linked chains were

\* From *Tristes Tropiques* by Claude Levi-Strauss. Copyright © 1955 by Librairie Plon. English translation by John and Doreen Weightman, copyright © 1973 by Jonathan Cape Limited. Reprinted by permission of Atheneum Publishers, New York.

## MEDIA SEXPLORATION

common among high ranking Caduveo women, but chains were also used by women of lower social status.

Body-painting designs in primitive societies are directly—though subliminally—involved with political, social, and economic status. Painted or tattooed on the face, neck, and body of Caduveo noblewomen, the intricate designs symbolized virility and fertility and established the wearer as the property of a man of wealth and power. The interlocking design chain links testified to everyone in the tribe that this woman was chained to a husband of importance, with the implied admonition of "Hands off!"

These designs include symbolic representations related to religious, reproductive, and fertility rites. The meanings and significance of the ornate, jeweled Vogue-advertised necklaces—similar to the primitive vegetable-dyed, body-painting designs—are also subliminal to the North American woman. The Monet jewelry designs were shown to several dozen North American women of affluence who were asked to briefly interpret the design's meaning. Their verbal rationalizations were consistently vague and obscure. Apparently, at least at any conscious level, they simply did not know what the designs meant.

Yet many of these women admired the jewelry, and several expressed a desire to own the pieces.

## Conscious Rationalizations

Not unlike the Caduveo women of status, overt meanings of the body decorations were repressed behind conscious rationalizations such as, "It's a good investment"; "It brings out the real me"; "It will go well with such and such new gown"; "It's pretty." The high price of this costume jewelry requires a strong purchase motivation—much stronger than such conscious rationalizations would support. Several investigators have commented upon how extraordinary it is that American women have no conscious idea of the symbolic meanings of even such simple decorative devices as the ribbon pinned snugly around their necks—a symbolic bondage collar whose significance must date back millenniums in human evolution. It is also curious that many men can sense sexual excitement

## The Fashion Massage

from such symbols without consciously understanding the reasons behind the stimulation.

Modern counterparts to these chain designs can be found in virtually any women's magazine or jewelry store. The bondage suggested by these symbols is far more comfortable, however, than the version symbolized with vegetable dyes on the necks and wrists of Caduveo women. Nevertheless, a heavy chain-linked neckpiece definitely symbolizes female bondage to the male—both sexual and psychological.

The important fact is that the jewelry designs are commercially successful, purchased at substantial expense by enough women to justify mass production, distribution, and advertising. The designs are, therefore, significant symbolic representations in their purchasers' lives. Most designs are said to originate in nature, yet there are so many millions of possible combinations and variations that it is most unlikely the Monet and Caduveo design similarities could be purely random chance. Monet jewelers could easily have adapted their designs from the aboriginal culture. Or reacting to subconscious archetypes, the designers might well have come up with the similar design motifs entirely on their own.

The frequent occurrence of symbolism with similar meanings among peoples who appear unrelated geographically, technically, or culturally is much too frequent to be dismissed as mere coincidence. St. Augustine pondered archetypal religious symbolism during the Fourth Century A.D. Carl Jung's and Claude Levi-Strauss's theories of archetypal symbolism are two more contemporary ways of trying to explain the phenomena. Jung theorized that these symbolic archetypal meanings have been with humans "since the beginning," suggesting a genetically inherited form of symbolic information. Levi-Strauss, on the other hand, theorized that humans have biological-based predisposition to interpret myths and symbols in highly consistent and similar ways.

Whatever the ultimate explanation, archetypal symbols dearly involve—especially in modern technological man—unconscious more than conscious significance.

## Color as an Archetype

Archetypal symbols cover an enormous range of sensory phenomena, both visual and auditory. Color also has archetypal characteristics. The entire range of color meaning operates at subliminal levels.

One of the difficulties in color research is that contextual variations in meaning are, for practical purposes, infinite. There is also an infinite range of possible shades for each basic color. All have meanings which are quite difficult, if not impossible, to express consciously. Yet everyone knows that a dark shade of red produces a vastly different feeling when painted on an automobile than when designed into a cigarette package. International research firms, such as Louis Cheskin's Color Research Institute in Chicago, have reaped fortunes out of testing colors on package designs.

If there is a single generalization possible about color, it would attest to the impossibility of generalizing on color meanings. Precisely the same color can change meaning drastically from one application to another. Further, color is a non-verbal medium of communication—not unlike design, music, and touching. Whatever words are used to describe color's effect upon behavior, the words will always be inadequate approximations of actual meaning.

Whatever color may be all about is extremely complex when the neuro-mechanisms of the eye are considered. It is presently an enigma as to how color information passes from the eye to the brain. Successful color testing on packages, for example, has developed nonverbal tests of feeling or emotion in order to probe color meanings. Some experimenters have successfully used electroencephalographs, galvanic skin response measurements, polygraphs, pupil dilation measurements, and retinascopes to access the unconsciously motivated automatic response of humans to color stimuli.

## Reality vs. Dream

One curious aspect of color's archetypal significance can be observed in publications such as *Vogue*. Thumb through any copy and compare meanings between black-and-white and colored illustrations. With the high budgets usually available

## The Fashion Massage

to this important mass merchandiser of fashion, the whole magazine could be published in four-color reproduction if it could sell or communicate more effectively. If a \$20,000 advertisement or illustration (the two are often the same in *Vogue*) sells effectively, the advertiser will easily sell more than twenty times the price of the ad.

In *Vogue* the black-and-white illustrations consistently appear to represent what the reader would perceive as her world of reality. Black-and-white fashion series in *Vogue*—most photographed by world-famous photographers of women such as Richard Avedon, William Penn, and Helmut Newton—display their slim, small-breasted models in moody, lonely, contemplative, and usually serious though sensuous poses.

The color illustrations, on the other hand, most often reflect what the reader would perceive as a dream or fantasy world—action or festive situations involving other women or men, and dreams or fantasies involving aspirations. This can be demonstrated on the four pages of a Peck & Peck advertisement in *Vogue* (see Figures 14, 15, 16, and 17).

In Figure 14, the black-and-white model has returned to her room from the beach. She is alone, looking down. The caption above the photo states, "I am on vacation indefinitely. Do not disturb my plans or do anything to upset me." On the opposite page's color layout, Figure 16, the same woman appears in an aspirational dream fantasy. She is part of the beach-resort vacation crowd and is looking at the photographer, her presumed companion. The captions, however, reflect black-and-white reality: "I feel I've spent my whole life alone." "Have you ever met a man you couldn't find?" "I'm in silver water, I'm coming up fast."

The following evening gown illustrations, Figures 15 and 17, carry the model's dream fantasies of solitude a step further. In the black-and-white layout she walks toward her dream on the opposite page, wearing a simple polka-dotted evening gown. In the dream fantasy she attends a gay, intimate terrace sunset party. The captions, however, make reality statements: "I remember it the way it should have been." "Motion. It's the outside of emotion." "How do you photograph a feeling?"

These advertisements were published in the December 1972

Issue of Vogue, picturing the model—with whom the reader will identify—on a lonely Christmas pilgrimage to the Bahamas. Every fashion design on the four pages subtly incorporates ancient religious symbolism.

### A Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose ...

On the black-and-white illustration (Figure 12) the swimming suit and skirt pattern is strikingly similar to a design discovered in ancient water markings. Religious scholar Harold Bayley described the symbolic design as originating from the Paradise of Brahmin—a high-caste Hindu sect. The Hindu prophet said, "The Almighty has his home in the heart of a white rose." In Christian legends the white rose was often a symbol of Jesus and was also identified with the Greek virgin Sophie.

The red rose in its wild state has five roundish petals. Compare the Peck & Peck pattern with Bayley's drawings of the ancient water marking (Figure 13). It is, of course, possible that the designer copied the design from drawings or from the actual watermark, but this would hardly explain the symbolic design's commercial success among wealthy (high status) American women.

In the illustration (Figure 18) the swimsuit is designed with a fish and dolphin symbolic pattern. In the ancient shield symbol (Figure 19) the shield on which the symbol appeared even resembled the silhouette of a modern swimsuit. These drawings of the rose watermark and the dolphin shield were taken from Harold Bayley's book *The Lost Language of Symbolism* published in 1912.

Both the fish and the dolphin are ancient symbolic representations of Christ the Savior. The fish symbol was frequently used by early Christians in the catacombs, and its popularity was at least partially explained by the word for fish in Greek which yielded the initials of the sentence "Jesus Christ, Son of Man, Savior." Even today, the fish is often used as a symbol of Christ.

The fish, as a symbol for the Deity, often took the specific form of a dolphin, which was anciently regarded as a friend of man. The Greeks venerated the dolphin as the savior of

## The Fashion Massage

the shipwrecked, and later Christians often used the dolphin to symbolize their Christ.

The Peck & Peck bathing suit design pattern utilized both the fish and the dolphin symbolism on a shield formed by the bathing suit which covers the woman's reproductive anatomy from breasts to genital area.

The evening gown displayed in the color illustration, Figure 17, was also based upon ancient Christian symbology. The pattern on the blue evening gown is a series of circular designs that are almost exact reproductions of the legendary Catherine wheel. The teeth on some of the design's wheels are shown turned inward (see Figure 20).

St. Catherine, so the story goes, was a virgin from Alexandria, Egypt, who openly confessed her loyalty to Christian gospel in A.D. 307. She was sentenced to death on toothed wheels—a popular, though painful, form of execution and torture reserved for important heretics and other deviants of the time. Fifty pagan philosophers were sent to pervert and corrupt St. Catherine while she was in prison awaiting execution. Through winning and irresistible eloquence, she converted the philosophers to Christianity. Thereafter, St. Catherine was regarded as the patroness of philosophers and learned scholars.

St. Catherine rejected all offers of marriage and reward. In a vision she visited Heaven and became the spouse of Christ. Christ plighted their troth with a ring in the design of the torture wheel.

The story of St. Catherine might be considered an archetypal Christian version of a much more ancient legend. Catherine (the word is from the Greek Catharos, or pure) was also the all-pure, immaculate, and undefiled Bride in the Song of Solomon. The toothed wheel in this earlier legend with which she is identified is the four- or six-rayed solar wheel. Cinderella, from the German legend, was sometimes called La Bella Catarina. Even today, a firework design used in Fourth of July celebrations bears the name Catherine wheel.

The Catherine wheel design appears also on another evening gown on the Peck & Peck advertisement (Figure 17) in the smaller photograph of our tourist dancing in an orange gown. She is surrounded, we might reasonably assume, by pa-

gan philosophers attempting to corrupt her. Another version or adaptation of the Catherine wheel theme appeared in an earlier Vogue advertisement for Best & Company, an exclusive Fifth Avenue clothier. The hostess robe and turban are decorated with large toothed wheels—the teeth either covered or turned inward (Figure 21).

### Keepers of the Secret

Women's unconscious taboos are massaged just as often as men's. Thumb through any women's magazine and study the ads, illustrations, and copy for symbolism that would stimulate unconscious taboo mechanisms. Observe carefully such details as body contacts; where eyes are looking; fingers, feet, arm, and leg lines and where they point; model relationship dominance and subordinance; and, of course, background and embeds.

With this in mind, one illustration was selected from a Sears catalog (Spring and Summer 1971) as typical of the unconscious story line and hidden taboos manipulation (see Figure 22).

Each photograph in a catalog of this kind involves many thousands of dollars in merchandise inventory. The Sears Catalog art department people must know precisely what they are doing. Where women's fashions are concerned, a blunder in an illustration or a passive design that could not motivate sales could easily result in a major disaster. Carefully examine this—at first glance—innocuous fashion photograph. Try to find out how it sells the product.

These models, appear to have been photographed separately and their pictures pasted upon the background in interlocking poses. The composite layout was then rephotographed. Outlines are sharp and even. The grass around the models' shoes appears retouched.

The foreground brunette in the light blue slacksuit is feigning sleep. She appears relaxed. Though probably listening carefully to what is going on behind her between the other two models, she is—at the moment—detached. Her left arm hangs limply at her side: her right arm and hand effortlessly prop up her chin and head. The forefinger of her right hand is interesting, as it is pointed toward her left breast.

## The Fashion Massage

Of the two background models, the one in blue-white appears dominant. Blue and white are much more masculine and dominant colors than the pale green and yellow.

The designs are curious. The blue and white pantsuit blouse carries a design often used on men's ties and shirts—symbolic of tadpolelike, wiggling spermatozoon. The brunette model's right foot is placed firmly upon the ground; her right hand, held in a loose fist, forcefully pressed against her hip.

The brunette model's hair is short and bound in a white ribbon, again masculine and dominant. The most provocative detail in the photograph, however, is the brunette's eye contact line directed at the blonde's right breast. Her gaze is quite intent. Her mouth is open in an expectant expression, suggesting an oral caress.

Her left hand is behind the blonde's back, though as might be logically expected the hand does not appear at the blonde's waist. The missing hand, following the brunette's left shoulder line, would likely be on the blonde's buttocks.

## Applied Body Language

There seems little doubt that the brunette is making a rather specific sexual overture to the blonde. The blonde, however, appears passive—at least so far. Her pale green and yellow slack suit is covered with flowers, symbolic of virginity, fertility, passion, freshness, and sexuality. The flower of course, is the plant's reproductive organ.

The blonde's right foot and knee are positioned aggressively between the brunette's legs. Right hands and arms denote symbolically, a course of action. Left hands, as symbols, are usually passive or supportive. The blonde's right hand rests lightly against the inside of her thigh. The hand's thumb and forefinger provide a vaginal symbol halfway between the genital areas of the two models. Tracing a line from the blonde's forefinger upward to the left, the line intersects the blue and white flower in the border design located precisely over the brunette's genital area.

In terms of story line, the two brunette models in blue appear to be a couple—the light blue with the passive or feminine role, the blue-white with the dominant, masculine role. The passive partner is pretending sleep, unaware of all the in-

teresting things going on behind her back. The pale green and yellow model appears to be an outsider, a newcomer. Her slack suit really is not compatible with the other two. The blonde, her eyes on a distant horizon, appears to be weighing the possibility of joining the pair.

The Sears fashion artist did not leave his audience dangling, so to speak. To consciously discover what happened to the three-way relationship—which bears a remarkable resemblance to the Dionysian Greek statue The Three Graces and the countless adaptations of the idea in European Renaissance art—all the astute Sears catalog reader need do is look at the small photographic inset at the left. All three models have removed their pants and presumably their inhibitions. The blonde had to completely take off her one-piece slack suit. She is now wearing a short flowered dress.

The light blue brunette has reassumed her role as lady of the house. She proudly, if not arrogantly, displays her body to the others, her right arm inactive and the thumb and forefinger in the vaginal symbol with the knuckle and forefinger pointing toward the blue and white model's genital area. Blue-white, on the other hand, appears to be still on the make, her right hand on the blonde's shoulder, her eyes now peering down at the blonde's left breast.

Blue-white's left hand now appears behind light blue. Her attention is divided between the other two women. The blonde, however, is still the outsider. But she now appears more relaxed and at ease. Her arms are relaxed at her sides, though her right thumb and forefinger still symbolize her vagina.

## The Best in the Business

Remember, this single illustration is not the work of amateurs. Sears is widely known to employ some of the best technicians in the business. Their catalog art department can obtain, from year to year, the most direct and simple feedback verification available in modern mass communication media. Sears could tell you, through a simple computer run, how many of each of the three slack suits pictured in this single illustration were sold. Should these communication techniques not work effectively, it would be rapidly discovered.

## The Fashion Massage

The Sears, as well as other retail merchandising catalogs, are loaded with similar salacious implications. As these phenomena are very widely and repetitively used, they simply cannot be dismissed as accidental. Most of the techniques described in this chapter have been used by artists for centuries. None are even remotely what anyone could call new. What appears new is our inability to recognize the manipulative objective of these illustrations and designs and the profit-seeking industry they sustain.

Modern consumers seem to believe they are deciding purchase preferences all on their own, much like the man who smokes the "thinking man's cigarette." The significance of art and design—most of which involves the unconscious—has been almost completely detached from the study of human behavior in American universities' mechanistic-oriented psychology, sociology, and anthropology departments, suggesting that somehow this is a subject our so-called modern civilization simply does not wish to deal with. It is quite possible that societies—much like individuals—collectively repress information, concepts, and ideas which would produce high anxiety levels if dealt with consciously.

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# 4

# Children of the Tit Culture

You want to know, Little Man, how you are? You listen on the radio to the announcements of laxatives, dental creams and deodorants. But you fail to hear the music of propaganda. You fail to perceive the bottomless stupidity and the disgusting bad taste of things which are designed to catch your ear. Have you ever paid close attention to the jokes which a master of ceremonies makes about your whole small miserable world? Listen to your laxative's propaganda and you learn who and how you are.

WILHELM REICH  
Listen Little Man

## With Lifetime Consequences

Substantial evidence supports the view that America's media-oriented economy has actually changed human life patterns from infancy through old age, at both conscious and—more importantly—unconscious levels.

## Children of the Tit Culture

During the approximate first two years of a child's life, every infant grows through clearly observable stages. Sigmund Freud proposed only two major stages of psychosexual development during this early period—the oral, roughly the first year; and the anal, roughly from one to three years. Other theorists such as Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson have described these early stages in much greater detail—Piaget identifying six stages during the first two years of an infant's life. For the moment, Freud's theoretical structure will be useful to consider in relation to media, even though the theory is diffuse in many respects. (The reader is urged to examine a much more detailed synthesis of insights into early growth patterns in Dr. Theodore Lidz's excellent book *The Person*.)

Freud's oral phase roughly divides into two parts. During the first six months of an infant's life, food is of primary importance. The infant's life centers upon the taking of food through sucking. The first and most vital of all human relationships involves receiving nourishment from the mother, upon whom the infant is totally dependent. During this early process, the infant orients for the first time toward feeding, an affectionate need for others, and varied mouth-centered activities. Infant sucking behavior produces erotic (sexual) stimulation and, of course, is highly pleasurable. This is easily apparent as infants tranquilly suck away at their mother's nipple, a nursing bottle, or when there is nothing else handy their thumbs.

During the following six to eight months, the infant's concern with food expands to include socialization, which also centers upon the mother. Tactile or touching experiences

appear to reinforce the child's sense of security. Touching—hand, mouth, genital, body, the whole range of tactile experience—is vital social learning during this early oral growth stage. No portion of an individual's life experience will be as thoroughly incorporated into their personality or become so much a basic part of lifelong character as infancy or roughly the first two years of life.

Children eventually mature, but an indelible lifelong cultural imprint has been made upon their individual personalities. Keep in mind that these early sensory experiences that focus upon oral and tactile gratification are fundamental to

virtually everyone's personality. The need for such experiences will endure in one form or another, in one degree or another, throughout life.

Most individuals periodically regress throughout their lives to oral dependency when confronted with tensions, anxieties, or fears of rejection—a psychic or symbolic return to the maternal breast. In adults the real nature of these oral sensual stimulations is usually camouflaged while they suck away at cigarettes, cigars, pipes, food, and drinks. Sucking continues as a primary, normal, healthy, and emotionally fulfilling activity for both sexes at all ages.

Nursing and touching practices are largely culture-adaptive. Some cultures, for example, encourage breast-feeding the infant for two years or more. Other cultures, such as that of North America, have virtually eliminated breast-feeding or have shortened the period to only a few weeks.

Unlike their counterparts in most parts of the world, North American women consider breast-feeding undignified, an annoyance, and inferior to mechanical systems of infant feeding. Some cultures encourage extensive handling, touching, or caressing experiences between the infant, brothers, sisters, and parents, as well as other adults. Other cultures, like ours, reduce touching and handling experiences to a minimum.

American mothers are not permitted by their cultural taboos to consciously admit, even to themselves, that they obtain sexual stimulation while nursing their infants. Such distortions of the life process by both conscious and unconscious traditions provide insights into cultural forces invisibly at work in modifying human behavior.

### Strong Traditional Taboos

At least two definable reasons appear behind the Anglo-American mother's aversions to touching and nursing her child. This culture has a strong incest taboo and a homosexual fear tradition whose roots go far back into its history.

American mothers stop touching their sons, and fathers stop touching their daughters much earlier in America than in most parts of Asia, Latin America, or Africa. But in all

## Children of the Tit Culture

cultures, touching between parents and children of the opposite sex eventually stops. The incest taboo appears universal.

One insight into America's strong incest taboo tradition recently turned up in research on legal sanctions. Over the past century, one midwestern state had enacted nineteen laws that attempted to define acceptable and unacceptable marital relationships. These laws prohibited marriages between various specific distant relatives. Even considering the current genetic theories of recessive gene inheritance and its effect upon intra-family marriages—theories far from universally accepted by geneticists—only three of these laws would have been justified. But their very existence betrays their society's high level of underlying incest fear. In many nations and states, not even a trace of such prohibition can be found in legal statutes, implying a much lower level of concern.

Touching fills a healthy need in many cultures for the expression of affection and for reassuring tactile stimulation. In America, very possibly the world's most advanced no-touch culture, touching threatens to invite intimacy. Training children to avoid touching experiences with parents, other adults, or even with other children is a solidly established though usually unnoticed (repressed) norm in North America.

In other cultures where this taboo is not so highly developed, it is a common sight to view children communicating nonverbally through physical contact well up into the late teen or even adult years. But because, Americans have been taught to both consciously and unconsciously sexualize all forms of touching, the physical caress or desire for body contact from a member of one's own sex becomes a highly threatening gesture, even though in reality there may be no more sexuality involved than in stroking a kitten.

Between people of the same sex, touching also implies homosexuality—possibly the most feared and terrifying betrayal of the inner self possible in America. Should an American child openly display physical touching behavior with other children, most parents either overtly or covertly punish the child for doing something "dirty" or "bad." The parents' unconscious fears are projected on their children's behavior. Children so conditioned, of course, will condition their chil-

dren, who in turn when they become parents, will condition . . .

Repressed sexual fear, much like all types of repression, makes humans highly vulnerable to subliminal management and control technology. Through subliminal appeals and reinforcements of these fears, some consumers can be induced into buying almost anything.

### Lolita Is Alive, Well, and Living in Media

American culture has strong taboos concerning older men and young women relationships—a major American taboo sometimes called the dirty-old-man syndrome. Today, we even hear of his counterpart, the dirty old woman. These syndromes are derivative of incest fear—father and mother symbols identified with the young.

The exploitation of sex guilt between parents and children, or adults and children, is frequently apparent—if you look carefully—in marketing products. As one example, the child in the Bell Telephone bill insert is probably about twelve years old (see Figure 23). These messages were mailed with monthly statements to subscribers all over North America in a money-saving (for the phone company) attempt to induce subscribers to use directories instead of calling information.

At the surface level, a twelve-year-old girl appears posed on a phone book. She stands on tiptoe, stretching upward, apparently reaching for something. She might be reaching for a telephone number, but somehow that just doesn't make logical sense.

The insert provoked the anger of a group of women attorneys in Toronto who strongly objected to the use of pedophilia—the utilization of children as sex objects—in advertising. The twelve-year-old is obviously posed in a sexually provocative posture, her dress stretched above her exposed fanny.

Lightly embedded in the child's leg—to be perceived subliminally—are several SEXEs. In the top of her white stocking appears an embedded word FUCK lightly shadowed into the stocking folds (see Figure 24). These subliminal stimuli would be most effective in a culture such as North Ameri-

## Children of the Tit Culture

ca's where any suggestion of adult-child sexuality is instantly repressed. Though these particular embeds are clearly observable in the photograph, many parents cannot consciously perceive them.

To strengthen the sexuality concept at the subliminal level, Bell's advertising agency included some even more suggestive verbalisms in the ad copy on the insert's backside. The headline advises, "The book is yours TO DO WHAT YOU WANT WITH." A reasonable question might be whether the headline refers to the book or the child standing upon it. The printed script includes some other interesting words and phrases. The word "flick" in script transposes subliminally into something more aggressively Anglo-Saxon. "You can make it" certainly evokes a salacious implication, as does "Bend over." "Make red marker slashes" might even suggest a sadomasochistic theme while "the harder it works" is hardly an appropriate description for a telephone book in action—the user may work hard at "it," but never the book itself (see Figure 25.)

The Bell Telephone Company message was not an isolated case. Sexualization of infants and children, though subliminally perceived, strongly appeals to the society's underlying sexual taboos. There is no question that the technique sells products by the millions of dollars' worth and otherwise manages behavior.

Foote, Cone, and Belding, Inc.—America's sixth largest advertising agency—took great pride in their Miss Clairol "Does She or Doesn't She?" campaign. The agency's creative director, Shirley Polykoff, even published a best-selling book in which she romantically describes the trials and tribulations of Madison Avenue. She used the Miss Clairol slogan as her book's title.

Miss Clairol, of course, is a hair dye aimed at a market of teen-aged girls. Aside from teaching teen-agers to dye their hair as a means of attracting males, the "Does She or Doesn't She" slogan has clear sexual implications for young women going through puberty.

To cite only one example of the level of venality into which American media have fallen, a Miss Clairol ad on the inside front cover of the February 1975 Reader's Digest, (a

publication which used to be a staunch defender of middle-class morality), asks the familiar question. The illustration portrays two models in the role of mother and daughter—the daughter portrayed by a model eight or nine years old. The model portraying the mother holds the child's skirt up with her right hand. The mother's left hand appears to be under the skirt. "The "Does she or doesn't she?" question is answered in the copy head with the statement, "She Still Does!"

Simply put, those taboos held most strongly by any culture intensify that culture's vulnerability to subliminal manipulation. Pedophilia—the sexualization of children—is unquestionably the most feared taboo within the American culture. Therefore, it makes a superb subliminal advertising theme.

### The Thoroughly Integrated Culture

The American mother is exhaustively trained throughout life to fear that damage to her breast contours may occur from child nursing, resulting in rejection, a loss of sexual attractiveness, and loss of life. The rapid disappearance of infant breast-feeding in America has a great deal to do with the American breast fetish.

Male preoccupation with the large, virgin-contoured mammary glands—denied them in infancy—as reflected by Hollywood, television, and Playboy magazine—is also largely the result of media conditioning. Media exploits the American male breast fetish which, in turn, reinforces the female aversion to breast-feeding infants. The highly integrated, mutually reinforcing elements of culture function like a fine watch mechanism.

Americans are frequently astonished to discover that the breast is not a primary erogenous stimulus in many of the world's cultures, including several where female breasts even remain uncovered in public. In the Far East, for example, small feet are every bit as sexually provocative as large breasts are in America. In both cultures the "natural" look of the female body was dropped in favor of highly artificial symbolic representations—the Chinese tightly bound women's feet with bandages while Americans bind women's breasts with uplift brassieres. Somewhere in both cultures there was a

payoff. In the Far East bound feet imprisoned the woman and made her into an economic and sexual asset that simply could not run away. In America the uplift brassiere has made fortunes for clothing manufacturers and imprisoned the woman psychologically as a conical-breasted sex object.

### A Media Hold-up

The brassiere industry is a multimillion-dollar annual economic event within the American economy, a vital and basic sector to the whole garment and textile industry. Puerto Rico manufactures over three fourths of America's brassieres and is known in the trade as the bra capital of the world. One economist sardonically commented that the famed Operation Bootstrap Economic Development Program was held up by a padded bra.

In America, possibly more so than in any other national culture, the idealized shape and contour of large virgin breasts have developed as a cultural focal point largely through the effects of commercial media—newspapers, magazines, and television providing visual emphasis upon the mythical breasts of the idealized American woman (i.e. Mother).

This cultural ideal is a blatant fiction. Breasts, like the women equipped with them, come in all shapes and sizes which change continually throughout life. Biologically speaking, there is no such thing as a meaningful norm as far as natural breast contours are concerned. In fantasies, however, there is a virtual absolute American standard breast configuration.

In one composite image study assembled by a national marketing organization, dozens of men's publications were reviewed. From advertising and illustrations directed at male readers, the breast pictures were collected and cut out. In isolation from the ad copy, trademarks, etc., they were shown to several dozen women who were requested to describe the woman who belonged to the pictured breasts—age, occupation, height, weight, physical condition, etc.

A substantial majority of the female respondents described the breasts as those of young pregnant or nursing mothers,

The cut-out breasts were then given to several artists, who were requested to synthesize the individual variations in contour, size, nipple, etc., into a composite drawing. There was no question the final composite breasts were the large, full, bulging mammary glands of a young, lactating mother.

A panel of brassiere designers estimated the composite image was a size 38D cup. This large, full bra size was then compared with the annual national bra sales by size of a large North American department store chain. Only 8.9 percent of women wear a size 42 or larger bra; over half, 56.5 percent, wear a size 34 or 36; only 34.7 percent of all North American woman (roughly one third) wear a C cup or larger in any size, and only 13.6 percent wear a D cup or larger.

The media fantasy—a size 38D—represented a very small percentage of North American women—only 1.6 percent wear 38D or 38DD bras. But the heavy use of this fantasy standard by media conveys an unconscious ideal that can only place the vast majority of real women on the defensive. Young women with small breasts, literally most young women in North America, are thus educated to feel themselves inferior misfits. They are thusly transformed into ardent consumers of tit decoration techniques—padded brassieres, foam injections, or even plastic surgery. But no real-life woman could ever match the symbolic maternal perfection of the centerfold Playboy magazine and its competitors do not touch breasts, they retouch them.

### Retouching Beats Touching

Our Playboy reader is often doomed to a lifelong search for someone to mother him—a role no mature woman in her right mind would accept. A woman who fails to qualify as this fantasy ideal—and no woman is ever likely to qualify completely—must resign herself to become merely a sex object for the playboy to manipulate and use. The playboy may wander the earth for a lifetime without ever forming a meaningful relationship with a woman. Of course, as is unconsciously implied in the playboy concept, he may eventually give up his search and opt out with another man.

An even more dismal fate befalls the young woman who

## Children of the Tit Culture

does not conform to the fantasy expectations of acceptable feminine beauty. The big-breasted magazine, newspaper, and television models are not offset by the homosexual or narcissistic image norms communicated by the small-breasted models for the specialized female audiences of *Cosmopolitan*, and *Vogue* magazines. Every large American city has tens of thousands of working women—many highly talented, sensitive, and interesting women—who are unlikely to establish permanent mates because they physically do not fit into the current media-induced fantasy of what an attractive woman should look like.

The cartoon character Linus, in *Peanuts*, symbolizes the American male's search for security, if only in the form of a satin-edged blanket. It is significant that prolonged thumb-sucking is virtually unknown in cultures where infants are breast-fed. Thumb-sucking, later in life, is transposed into a search for oral gratification through symbolic breasts, cigarettes, alcohol, foods, and drugs. The search for comfort, security, and love through oral gratification is another fundamental cultural theme of American commercial media. Merely sit for an evening in front of network television and make notes on how many commercials you view per hour that are involved with mouths or the putting of things into mouths.

Literally everyone has some oral characteristics. Some individuals appear more orally centered in their behavior than others, but oral characteristics tend to surface when any individual experiences intense anxiety or insecurity, often when consciously-perceived stimuli trigger memory traces repressed within the unconscious during early childhood or infancy.

The oral character is often consistent, however, in his techniques of passively seeking to obtain needed fulfillment from others. Oral personalities are likely to fear abandonment. Unless there is someone to feed and care for them, they generally lack self-confidence. Some of the more aggressive oral types doubt they can fulfill their needs without controlling and managing other people. They may drive themselves mercilessly while exploiting others in their never-fulfilled search for security.

If indulged excessively as children, "oral" adults can de-

velop an unshakable optimism that interferes with their ability to care for themselves, assuming others will somehow look out for them. Those who were orally deprived and frustrated as infants tend to deep-rooted pessimism and are easily hostile or resentful when their needs are not met. They tend to easily give up when frustrated. Many famous literary figures and orators have been dominantly oral in their personalities, openly displaying (for example) love for both words and food. The interrelated oral problems of love, food, insecurity, and dependency are also visible in the histories of many psychosomatic diseases such as ulcers and asthma.

Both media information content and advertising—pushing food, drinks, security, insurance, affection, maternal dominance, and upset stomachs—testify eloquently to widespread unconscious oral preoccupations.

### The Crest Cavity

The Crest advertisement from the September 10, 1971, issue of *Life* is another illustration of an advertiser's appropriation of a nation's collective unconscious in merchandising its products (see Figure 26). This ad is a superb example of a subliminal oral-regression persuasion technique.

The one-toothed baby in white is, of course, a boy—a pink dress would have meant a girl. When dealt with at the conscious level, the overt genital symbolism is obvious and annoying; the mother's phallic forefinger holding down the bottom lip of the child's open, female-genital symbolic mouth, provides the photograph's primary focal point. For most readers, the fovea in the eye's retina saccades from the open mouth and finger up to the father's face (the curve lines retouched into his cheek), then directly left to the mother's eyes, diagonally down from her nose across the baby's face, down to his arm and hand, then a quick jump to the left and you see the Crest toothpaste tube.

Now, let's go back and look at what was perceived on the periphery of the retina's fovea, during the lightning-quick conscious perceptual experience.

On the back of the child's hand appears a series of embedded SEXes (see Figure 27). SEXes are also embedded

Children of the Tit Culture

on the faces of both parents, in their hair, on the mother's hand and fingers, and mosaiced across the child's dress.

Just think about all that Crest has to offer in addition to "No Cavities."

# The American Clean

Civilization has progressed toward cleanliness, as a result of the repression of anality.

SIGMUND FREUD  
Letters

## The Hard Sell of Clean

Supporting an industry that merchandises a vast array of products dedicated to making us clean, Americans have been exhaustively taught (programmed, if you prefer) to be clean, think clean, and buy only clean. Clean, however, is far from a universally agreed-upon concept. The meanings attributed to the word "clean" vary substantially from culture to culture and from time to time. What is clean in one country may be dirty in another; what was clean twenty years ago may be dirty today or vice versa. Clean depends almost entirely upon where you happen to be standing and when. The meaning of words, however, is far more related to the ways people react to them than to what the dictionary says about them—especially words like clean. What someone says and what someone does about conceptual words often provides distinctly different definitions of meaning.

The concepts of clean and dirty in American media are based primarily upon what we have been educated (programmed) to believe exist—germs, bacteria, dirt, as well as other microscopic or submicroscopic threats to our emotional

## The American Clean

well-being. The emotional implications of "dirty" are far more threatening in media fantasies than are the physical, such as disease or infection.

Dirt with its related fantasies is vastly profitable. "Not clean" in advertising, means bad breath (halitosis), obesity, dandruff, greasy hair, psoriasis, unbright teeth, unwhite clothing, and constipation. Clean is often used to describe virtually anything of significance in American life—including, not least of all, concepts of morality and sin. People and clothes are clean-cut, we breathe (or we used to breathe) clean, fresh air, our political, athletic, and military victories are described as clean sweeps. The incessant claims of the Clean corporations is often couched in the language of patriotism and national loyalties: "Look at what we are doing for you! America is the cleanest nation on earth."

Unilever, Procter & Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive, and their smaller competitors annually pump via the public information media over \$10 billion in soaps and detergents of a hundred varieties which promise to deodorize, sanitize, antibacterialize, whiten, brighten, bleach, blue, sterilize, hygienize, and—as an important, though unspoken psychogenic byproduct—dehumanize.

Clean, as a viable selling technique, is rooted in each individual's psychosexual development. Roughly between the first and third birthdays, children's primary concern shifts from the oral to the anal areas of their bodies. Infants experience erogenous pleasure from passing or withholding bowel movements. Children value their anal product and find enjoyment in both its odor and its feel. The child holds back the stool until its accumulation brings about violent muscular contractions. As the stool finally passes through the anus, the mucous membranes are powerfully stimulated. The experience, though sometimes painful, is also highly pleasurable.

This is probably the only time in their lives that most Americans consciously enjoy their bowel movements. Many children's later conflicts with authority figures have roots in this early anal period where then\* need to conform and comply focused upon bowel training. A clear relationship exists between the erotic gratification, conflict over bowel training, and various adult personality traits.

Bowel training is not biologically necessary during the sec-

ond year of a child's life. It serves only as a convenience for the parent. Many cultures permit children to bowel-train strictly on their own with no parental coercion. Most children appear to develop control over their bowel movements at about the same time—during the third year—whether or not their parents have trained them. However, America's advertising-managed culture demands that bowel training be introduced as early as possible, during the second year or even earlier.

Mothers have been taught over many generations to fear and reject dirt, a symbolic concept which basically implies feces or feces particles. With the American mother's preoccupation with bacteria, germs, and other microbes, her disgust with dirty toilets and kitchens, her anxiety whenever her floor or laundry is less than white or clean, there is no way she can possibly tolerate a child who pumps out odorous, contaminated excrement several times each day.

The media perpetuated heritage teaches that if they are to avoid guilt, American mothers must train their children in cleanliness at the earliest possible moment

### American Regularity

Furthermore, if children can be programmed to respond with mechanical predictability in their bowel movements, mothers can enjoy a much greater degree of personal freedom and convenience. Like adults, children are carefully educated to fear constipation, one of clean America's most pernicious foes. The mechanical enema, or its chemical counterpart the laxative, is standard procedure in many, if not most, American homes. Many Americans train themselves and their infant children to defecate on time, much as they condition themselves to eat on time. Deviations from regularity produce extreme anxiety.

It does not take most infants long to discover they can control maternal reactions to a large degree by letting go or holding in their excrement, counter to Mother's expectations and coercive demands. Eventually, of course, the child loses the game, but the training course may leave scars far deeper than even those experienced in a Marine boot-training camp.

## The American Clean

Later, as an anally compulsive adult, the individual may see excretion as symbolic of enormous power.

The ominipresent barrage of advertising that harps upon "regularity" will in itself subliminally program certain individuals to feel themselves freaks if they are irregular, often imposing guilt over the body's inability to comply with the pharmaceutical houses' admonishments. The industry creates its own market by inducing constipation through guilt and anxiety, then providing a simple and profitable solution for it

As children grow to adulthood, their anal eroticism is repressed more deeply into the unconscious by the daily barrage of anal-oriented media content. Children between two and six perceive an average of fifty-five hours weekly of television in North America—much of it jammed with anal-oriented Clean Product advertising, virtually all of which is subliminally reinforced by hidden SEXes and other techniques.

The prevalence of widespread anal fixation is sharply apparent when the American culture is compared with primitive cultures, or those of less industrialized nations, where time-oriented anal and oral preoccupations are either nonapparent or much less emphasized. A number of anthropologists have referred to the American culture, however, as strongly anal-oriented—much more so than any national culture on earth at the moment. If we were to rank national anality, the British would likely be second.

Psychiatrists have pointed out that adult anal erotics often unconsciously enjoy their bowel movements and their perspiratory and salivary mechanisms (bodily secretions). The anal-erotic typically overemphasizes body functions, however, and may consciously repress these as pleasurable feelings. Chronically constipated individuals tend to stubbornness, showing covert hostility by withholding affection from others in a silent and determined way—as they probably did during their early bowel training. They also display varying degrees of miserliness, pettiness about details, meticulousness, and pedanticism.

This so-called anal personality has problems over holding or letting loose, about keeping or sharing both possessions and information about themselves. They tend to ambivalence on love and hate, both of which they have learned to conceal. Ironically, individuals overtly concerned with cleanliness and

neatness are very often covertly quite dirty and messy. The apparent manifestations of these fixations often turn out to be merely superficial camouflage displayed for the benefit of others.

Overcontrolled children, especially at the critical anal phase, are quite likely to become individuals who need to hide hostilities and aggressions, who unconsciously feel they will be rejected, hated, or endangered if their real feelings are discovered. The anal character often believes others are always trying to get something from them, or that they will be shamed, embarrassed, or exposed if they communicate natural feelings or needs.

### Anal Syndromes

Media bombardment, reinforced with subliminal technique over many years after starting in infancy, could result in an unreasonable fear of dirt, germs, or contamination—in its extreme manifestation—mysophobia, the so-called housewife's neurosis. In this pathological example of anal preoccupation, some men and many women develop phobias about dirt. They become obsessed with scrubbing, washing, and sterilizing their bodies, homes, and possessions. Many mysophobes surround themselves with as much white as possible upon which they can detect the slightest suspicion of dirt—white rugs, clothes, even automobile upholstery. Ritualistic hand-washing is usually performed dozens of times daily, until quite frequently their hands become chapped and inflamed with pathological dermatitis.

This phobic reaction to fear of dirt (i.e., feces) is widespread in America and extremely difficult to treat. With great ingenuity, sufferers will go to virtually any extreme necessary to maintain their phobia, often sacrificing mates, children, and friends.

An opposite process appears in a symptom labeled coprophilia, another form of conditioning also believed the result of childhood anal trauma. The coprophilia-oriented adult consciously desires involvement in excrement, subliminally recalling the power once derived from free-flowing bowels. Humiliation and discipline through the use of strong enemas often become a technique of sexual gratification. There

## The American Clean

even exists a national "swingers" organization dedicated to coprophilia.

Most Americans would like to convince themselves that such "perversions" exist only within corrupt deviants who are so few they are not even worth comment. But telephone calls to eleven practicing psychiatrists in a midwestern city revealed that each was treating between one and nine patients monthly who could be described as mysophobic or coprophilic. These conditions appear to be far more prevalent than anyone inside or outside of medicine apparently suspects. Phobic compulsions appear very closely related to addictive behavior. Literally, American culture as expressed in the mass media does not include bowel movements. Even toilet bowls are omitted from bathroom scenes in television and movies. BM's are forbidden in public, hidden from both sight and smell. Bodily functions are first suppressed, then later consciously repressed.

Foreign visitors to America comment frequently upon the ingenious ways in which Americans disguise any reference to excrement. Euphemisms for bowel or urinary movements are elaborate, though apparently unnoticed at the conscious level. Like so many other cultural entities that involve various forms of perceptual defense, the techniques used to avoid dealing with body elimination processes (a euphemism, of course) become invisible to people within the culture.

One of the most elaborately disguised excretory industries in America sits upon a low, carefully landscaped bluff which overlooks the Los Angeles beach area. Perched upon the summit is a magnificent, modern, green tiled temple. When the smog is not too heavy, the building appears from a distance as a lovely architectural expression of man's dedication to higher inspirations and ideals. The lovely, almost poetic, name popularly applied to this noble structure is Hyperion Outfall, suggesting it may be a monument to America's most treasured dream for a better, more beautiful world.

But alas, Hyperion Outfall is the central sewage disposal plant for the City of Los Angeles. Inside the graceful structure are powerful, though invisible, pumps which transport via huge aqueduct pipes the collected excrement of three million people, depositing the liquid sewage five miles out in the

blue Pacific and the solid sewage seven miles out into the mouth of the very deep Santa Monica Canyon.

The number of words that describe various natural phenomena are often displays of what a particular culture considers significant. The Eskimo, for example, has roughly twenty words in his vocabulary that describe different types of snow, while in English there is only one.

Other languages, especially the Latin, are rich in popular words for shit, feces, caca, or what have you. In Spanish, for example, there are at least two dozen popular—mostly quite humorous—words that seek to describe excrement of various consistencies. Yet in modern English there are only two popular words for excrement—shit and crap—both vulgar, abrupt, hard four-letter words of profane rejection. Of course, one can always use the Latin medical euphemism for excrement and call it feces, or revert to baby talk and call it caca.

Though human excrement is often the subject of gut-level humor in Spanish, Portuguese, and French folklore, Americans take their shit most seriously, hiding and camouflaging this simplest of all human functions as though some repulsive form of criminal behavior might be involved.

### Soft Is Best

Even toilet paper is sold on the basis of how the soft roll squeezes, rather than how well the paper wipes. There is never the slightest suggestion in these ads as to the real use of toilet paper. A viewer might justifiably conclude that toilet paper is used for some other function than merely cleansing one's anus.

Delsey or Scott commercials even seem to propose some new form of predigested food carefully wrapped and sealed in plastic. Few foods are packed so hygienically. Subliminally, the ads are selling soft, clean bowel movements—implanting a symbolic projection where good, soft toilet paper substitutes for good, soft feces. Mr. Whipple, the supermarket manager who protects the Charmin tissue from being squeezed, is an anal stereotype. The TV audience will know he uses laxatives along with Charmin to maintain regularity.

Even a cursory review of national magazine and television

## The American Clean

details dearly how clean products are huckstered via the anal-erotic tendencies and fixations of the American consumer. The messages are devastatingly simple: Get rid of all that dirty, unsightly shit, both inside and outside—even if you can't actually see it. Remember that dirt, germs, bacteria, stains are always there waiting to get at you! Don't let it touch you or your loved ones. Scrub, spray, mop, wax, polish, disinfect, etc. Be safe, be Clean! A plethora of products compete dynamically for the privilege of guarding Americans from this filthy, unsightly, contaminated pollution.

Once the Clean Syndrome is well established in a culture it will persist generation after generation if reinforced by media. Passed on from parent to children, it is inherited almost like a genetic mutation and capable of similar long-term effects upon life. This is apparent in market research where large numbers of women as well as men continue to purchase brands of cleaning products preferred by their mothers or fathers.

Some writers have compared the American preoccupation with clean to a religious movement whose parish priests include Mr. Clean, the head-shaved symbol of dominant sexuality; an armor-clad, ghostlike apparition described as the White Knight, who charges about the neighborhood with his lance straight and erect; and the omniscient, muscled giant who materializes from walls or ceiling with a dome-topped, cylindrical spray can in his hand, introducing himself to the awed housewife as Big Wally. New priests of Clean are introduced every year or so by corporations who have built vast empires through ads for air fresheners, toilet bowl cleaners, toilet paper, laxatives, and acid-indigestion remedies.

## Clogged Sexuality

The Liquid-Plumr TV production is a thirty-second fantasy trip into the world of symbolic open bowels and unclogged sexuality, finally leading to the ultimate state of Clean. An opening scene portrays the ever-searching American housewife beneath her sink, exploring for germs and contamination. As her eyes gaze fondly and longingly at the stiff, upright drain pipe, an expression of euphoric affection and admiration spreads across her face (see figure 28). But the

background music strikes an ominous chord: all is not well back up in the sink. With the bowl (or bowel?) half full of dirty, foamy, repulsive water, the drain is clogged.

Liquid-Plumr, in the lone cylindrical phallic container with the domed top, is caressingly held in the housewife's delicate fingers as she confidently pours the life-giving fluid into the wastes and impurities that float disgustingly in her sacred sink. LP ekes to work instantly.

The ad's final scene is a triumph, an epic, a heroic masterpiece, as all impure thoughts together with unclean sources of contamination are sucked deeply down the drain, out of the sink and out of sight, leaving behind a sparkling pure kitchen—the housewife's throne room.

The four-second sink draining segment of the thirty-second commercial was videotaped and replayed a frame at a time. There are 72 frames per second in videotape compared with 24 in film. As the contamination began to swirl slowly around the drain, almost as if God had willed it, a large letter "S" appeared in the water (see Figure 29).

Then, as the drain further unclogged and the water rapidly bubbled down through the pipe, an "E" (the letter is brown) appeared floating agitatedly upon the bubbling filth (Figure 30). Finally, as the last of the ugly mess sucked its way down the drain, the letter "X" appeared over the drain opening (Figure 31). The entire subliminal sequence happened in roughly four seconds and is completely invisible to the conscious eye. The SEX, nevertheless, was recorded in the unconscious perceptual systems of millions of viewers instantly.

As an added subliminal feature, a face appeared on the bubble just above the final "X." Though the eyes are slightly offset, the nose and tooth-filled smiling mouth was readily apparent. The bubble face, above the "X," formed the ancient skull-and-crossbones symbol of death.

In the commercial's final scene, (Figure 32) the phallic LP container rested triumphantly in a bouquet of flowers (symbolic of the reproductive organs) and sparkling clean plumbing (symbolic of clean bowels). In this final placid, relaxed scene, Liquid-Plumr posed victoriously on the sink. To the left of the "L" in Liquid, above and left of the red band on the bottle, is the letter "E," which forms the center of a SEX

## The American Clean

mosaic The letter "S" appears to the left of the "E." The letter "X" appears on the white bottle to the left of the blue seal and just above the red band. Another "X" appears in the shadows below the "E."

The LP commercial was played at full speed for over a hundred test subjects. Even though they knew the SEX was embedded in the film, only about one third could consciously perceive the "S" after the second or third viewing. The other letters were completely invisible to conscious perception.

The next time you view a floor, window, or table wiped or mopped on television, or something being poured, watch the filmy surfaces carefully. You are probably being subed. Also watch the strained body-language positions from which the housewife models mop their floors. Appliances, brooms and mop handles usually point toward genital areas. Often the model has twisted her posture into an absurd contortion to achieve an appropriate genital relationship with her kitchen equipment.

## Free-Flowing Media

The sound track was recorded from a recent TV Drano commercial. In the story line, two sinks and two struggling housewives are heard. One woman, of course, clears her stopped-up sink with Drano; her voice is bright, sparkling, happy, triumphant. The hapless woman using the "other" brand, however, could not free her stopped-up sink. She spoke in a low, strained, guttural, almost painful voice. When the audio portion of the commercial was replayed several times without video, the second woman's voice unquestionably portrayed a woman straining unsuccessfully to evacuate (an admitted euphemism).

In a clever application of subliminal anality to food advertising, one ten-second radio commercial for a dairy association was classic. The announcer's smooth, low, sexual voice instructed the listener to "take a minute, have a beautiful experience, pour yourself a cool, pure, fresh glass of milk...." As the deep voice droned sensuously on with the soft, warm sell, liquid was heard swirling in the background while the voice described the appearance of milk and how it makes

your life more meaningful (i.e., sex life). When isolated and magnified, the pleasant, swirling sound of liquid presumably being poured appeared to be the recorded sound of a toilet being flushed. The subliminal logic—if it can be called logic—of the commercial is that milk will loosen up those tight bowels.

### Be Clean With Vaseline

Vaseline, today in America, has an almost archetypal symbolic significance as a vaginal and anal lubricant. The product has been a part of American folklore for over half a century in the form of several hundred obscene jokes.

Vaseline Intensive Care Cream, an intensively advertised product, reaches into millions of American homes. The concept of "Intensive Care," however, is never really explained on the label or in the advertising.

Except for certain dermatological situations that involve very minute portions of the population, human skin does not really require intensive care, nor would it benefit even if such care were available. The phrase was purloined from hospital parlance and describes care for critically ill patients. The phrase means to be taken care of, naturally, but also implies placing oneself under intensive management and control.

Vaseline Cream is a multisensory product: visual, olfactory, and tactile. From the label and advertising (see Figure 33), the cream's visual and conscious image involves protection against "chapped, irritated, rough, dry skin."

The cream is, the claim implies, so protective that water or other solutions will not rinse the substance off. The hands are symbolically sealed off from the threat of contamination and damage. But the source of all this danger is left unclear. Attempting to explain the motivating power behind the product's merchandising technique just does not make sense in terms of any factual reality.

The subliminal implications in Vaseline Cream go much, much deeper than merely chapped hands. Visually, VC appears to have a viscosity, texture, and color similar to that of seminal fluid.

Readers can visually examine the cream in the palms of

## The American Clean

their hands. The symbolic parallel is instantly obvious. The tactile experience of VC communicates a feeling of smoothness, again not unlike the texture of seminal fluid. But after rubbing several seconds, the oily feeling disappears and the lotion develops a dry, moderately sticky sensation before it disappears. Rubbing seminal fluid into the skin produces a very similar feeling and experience.

The tactile illusion presented, of course, is that the cream was absorbed by the skin—an illusion that is pure nonsense since the cream merely evaporates. Nevertheless, in terms of the visual and tactile illusion, Vaseline Cream appears to have vanished into the skin, forming a protective fantasy barrier against contamination.

The aromatics of Vaseline Cream are also revealing. The smell is sweet, light, with a subtle touch of lemon. The container's light yellowish color visually reinforces the aromatic experience of lemon. The multisensory appeal of the symbolic product is thoroughly integrated. In consumer aromatic tests, the flat, acid smell of temon is often identified with seminal fluid. When you recall the enormous variety of viscous, lemon-smelling cosmetic and soap products merchandised today, it appears that seminal fluid has become as symbolically important to our modern economy as it used to be for human reproduction. Olfactory symbols may be even more powerful at the subliminal level than the visual.

## The Seminal Cosmetic

Discovery of reproductive sperm in seminal fluid was a quite recent event in human history—perhaps two centuries ago at the most. The history of man's symbolic relationship with seminal fluid, however, is packed with incredible confusion, awe, wonder, superstition, and fantasy. Even in some societies today, the fluid is believed to have magical, supernatural powers to prolong youth, fertility, beauty, and sexual desirability. Wealthy medieval and Renaissance women employed alchemists to collect the fluid for use as a cosmetic. Seminal fluid, sometimes scented, was once applied lavishly to women's bodies and faces as a fertility ritual. The sperm whale was hunted for centuries primarily for

what appeared to be its seminal secretions which were used in expensive cosmetics and perfumed products. It is curious how, when the whaling industry is discussed, this tradition is today repressed—certainly not a suitable subject for conversation among polite, educated people. The most valued portion of the whale was traditionally spermaceti, not blubber. This seminal tradition, though thoroughly repressed from consciousness, is very much alive today in modern cosmetic products such as Vaseline Cream, tubed and bottled shampoos and soaps, liquid cleaners, face creams, treatments, etc.

In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*—perhaps the greatest of all whaling stories and literary probes of the American psyche—the author played with the archetypal meanings of sperm or seminal fluid when he wrote in Ishmael's final vision of love:

As I bathed my hands among the soft, gentle globules of infiltrated tissue . . . as they richly broke to my fingers . . . as I snuffed up that uncontaminated aroma . . . I forgot all about our horrible oath; in that inexpressible sperm, I washed my hands and heart of it . . . I felt divinely free from all ill will or petulance, or malice of any sort whatever....

In symbolic sperm, therefore, Ishmael cleansed himself of the contaminations of evil. He calls upon the entire world to unite in love:

. . . nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness.

Melville's humor was not at its most subtle when he alluded to "the angels of paradise, each with his hands in a jar of spermaceti."

### Subliminal Pets Are Different

In the Ladies' Home Journal, read by upper-middle-class, middle-aged housewives, an ad portrait of a jar of VC is held

## The American Clean

suspended between a woman's thumbs and middle fingers—highly significant parts of the female hand in many ad illustrations (Figure 33). Every woman who has ever lived knows, at both conscious and unconscious levels, how these fingers are used in masturbation or in caressing the vulva and clitoris. The symbolism would certainly qualify as a universal archetype.

To assure the message does not become confused or remain ambiguous within the reader's unconscious, the hands, jar, and blue background are covered with mosaics of embedded SEXes. A large, obvious SEX is embedded horizontally at the top and to the left of the stream of water directly above the right middle finger when the more or less than thin straight line of water crosses the wider splash. The "E" is, perhaps, the most obvious letter. The "X" is within and at the top of the water stream. The "S"—a large capital letter—is to the left of the "E." There are at least a dozen SEXes hidden in the water-splashed blue area above the hands.

The concept, often experienced in dreams, of "saved from the waters" (as it is designed into the Vaseline ad) symbolizes fertility and is a metaphorical image of childbirth. Water, remember, washes away original sin in baptismal rituals as well as in shower, soap, or Vaseline advertising. Water, when portrayed as drops, splashes, or running streaks, can also be symbolic of ejaculation. The closed jar is also an important symbol, representing the woman, the womb, and when the jar is full, virginity.

The Vaseline ad's basic symbolism—fingers, water, jar, and embedded SEXes—should easily sell thousands of gallons of cream. But there is more, much more (see Figure 34).

Hidden in the water, just below the top margin, to the left of center, is the rather large head of a cocker spaniel. Just to the left and below the cocker's right ear is the head of a cow—something like the cow's profile on the Pet canned milk label (a canned milk brand, incidentally, used primarily in infant's formulas). Below the cow's profile is another dog's head—possibly a fox terrier or beagle. The head is tilted, the eyes looking at the reader with love and longing. A wild dog is symbolic of a dreaded father, a domesticated dog a beloved father. The cow, of course, is an obvious symbol for mother.

A careful study of the blue area above the jar reveals several faces embedded in the flowing water. The faces could be human, even though the representations are as grotesque as something out of a nightmare. These faces may appeal to some bizarre sodomistic sexual fantasy believed common, by the advertiser, to women.

In the spray on top of the jar—directly above the "S" in "Vaseline" on the label—is a white bird with wings outstretched, as though frolicking in a subliminal bird bath. Birds have often symbolized the female genitals or vagina. A white bird, of course, would specifically represent purity or cleanliness. The 1960s euphemism "bird," meaning a young girl, is symbolically quite meaningful. The white bird—perhaps a pigeon or dove—is also symbolic of the soul, spirituality and, according to Carl Jung, the power of sublimation. The flying bird symbolizes release from sexual fear or inhibition.

Animals, generally, appear to play important roles in the human unconscious. The anthropomorphism (giving human attributes to animals) of animated cartoons, children's fairy and folk stories, and in such things as Halloween costumes and masks is highly meaningful.

Nothing appears to have been overlooked by this most profitable industry which is dedicated to making America the cleanest nation on earth.

# That Clean, Odorless Smell

Olfactory [odor] sensations  
awake vague and half-  
understood perceptions, which  
are accompanied by very strong  
emotions.

P. FRIEDMAN  
Observations on the Sense of Smell

## Smelling Is Big Business

International Flavors and Fragrances, Inc., a mammoth New York-based international corporation, is in the business of managing sensory experience for millions of individuals throughout the world. In their laboratories are roughly 60,000 fragrances (smells) and 20,000 flavors. IFF candidly brags that its business is sex and hunger—the two drives most basic to human survival over the past million years or so of human evolution. Many of their smells and flavors would be classifiable as subliminal as they are undetectable at conscious levels.

IFF (perhaps the largest, but only one of many companies in the business) has annual sales in excess of \$112 million. Their 1971 profit was \$17 million. Sixty-eight percent of IFF products are sold outside the United States to customers that include the so-called French perfume industry. The corporation manufactures in fourteen countries and sells to over one

hundred. IFF President Henry G. Walter, Jr., expects to be selling over \$500 million worth of smells and tastes annually before 1980. Thirty percent of their current business is in flavor, while seventy percent involves aromatic chemicals.

Spending \$11 million on behavior research in 1971, IFF had sponsored research at Masters and Johnson's Reproductive Biology Research Foundation where several years of intense study was devoted to the relationship between odors and sexual behavior. In the summer of 1972, IFF announced the discovery of a subliminal odor exuded by women during their monthly ovulation which they planned to synthesize and sell. The discovery itself was not startling. Most female mammals exude such odors though they are usually undetectable by other species. The announcement originated through the IFF corporate offices and appeared in Newsweek and other publications. The subliminal chemical is by now probably already a part of food, food packaging, cosmetics, clothing, and what have you—invisible odor stimuli supplying purchase motivations for millions.

If aromatic and flavor enhancement resulted in an increased capacity for intimate human relationships, IFF might be considered one of mankind's great benefactors. This possibility, however, does not appear to be the case.

### Nature's Way?

One of the current cosmetic claims is fascinating when looked at critically—the natural look, with its accompanying natural smell. It requires more cosmetics for a woman to achieve the natural look than it does to achieve the made-up look. In order to become natural, you must become more unnatural.

In one national TV commercial, Mother Nature is shown walking through a fruit market. She ignores, even snubs, the fresh piles of oranges, apples, grapefruits, cherries, pears, etc., selecting a can of Del Monte fruit cocktail as "the real thing" or as "nature's own flavor." Coca-Cola's recent product self-image makes the drink appear as a life necessity. Caramel-sugared soda water as "The Real Thing" might even

## That Clean, Odorless Smell

be hilariously funny except that millions of consumers apparently respond to the nonsense.

To be natural in America, one must carefully avoid natural states of existence. In fact, part of the conditioned concept of Clean implies that natural odors are inherently evil, morally objectionable, and unhealthy. Natural odors, that is, not synthetic-natural odors. American advertising demands virtually everything in nature be deodorized—then reodorized by synthetic aromatics: pine for bathrooms and kitchens, leather for plastic upholstery, charcoal for steaks, etc. With the human body, the basis for "good" smells is either a synthetic chemical odor or a total absence of odor—produced by plugging the bodies' sweat glands with gluelike deodorants or by anesthetizing the nose's olfactory bulbs with sprays or volatile chemicals.

## Aroma as Data

A brief review of animal experiments provides some insight into the significance of smelling to various species. Mammals living in water generally have poorly developed senses of smell. Fish, however, appear to both smell and taste with extraordinary sensitivity. Minnows and salmon, for example, distinguish by smell between males and females of their own species.

Canadian naturalist A. D. Hasler discovered that streams retain their own specific odors for years. Minnows retain these odors in their memories for several weeks after birth. Salmon and sea trout memories for odors related to reproduction are even more remarkable. High proportions of salmon return to stream locations where they hatched from distances of even thousands of miles after up to five years. In tests, roughly 2.5 percent (11,000 out of 470,000) of salmon survive their spawning migration, laying and fertilizing their eggs in exactly the same location in which they were hatched years earlier and then, of course, dying.

Salmon hatched in an inland stream were flown out to a connecting river from which they migrated to the sea. They returned to the exact stream in which they had been reared years later when they were ready to spawn, traveling a route

they had never traveled before. The experiment suggested that olfactory memory traces may even be inherited genetically. These remarkable, though quite natural, memory feats appeared based entirely upon the fish's highly developed ability to remember specific odors.

Rats, as well, have highly developed abilities to differentiate odor. Guinea pigs have been shown to possess an olfactory acuity a thousand times or more greater than man's. Dogs communicate with each other through smell stimuli, primarily emanating from their mouths, noses, and genital areas. They have been demonstrated to have olfactory acuity (smell sensitivity) 1 million to 100 million times greater than man. Whereas man distinguishes only a few thousand smells, dogs can distinguish about half a million, easily distinguishing one individual human scent out of thousands. Experiments with tracking dogs suggest that each individual human has a completely unique body odor. Dogs can identify a stick touched by a specific human finger for only two seconds. Further, odorous liquids such as alcohol and strong-smelling oils applied to the hand or stick do not prevent dogs from correctly selecting the one individual scent for which they are searching.

Evolutionary theory suggests that the olfactory bulbs, which are believed to collect aromatic molecules from air as it is breathed, appear to have been the evolutionary origin of what—in the highest developed species of life—we call the human brain.

The two halves of the brain appear to have originally been buds that evolved from the olfactory stalks. In the human foetus of six months and in adult lower animals, there are three pairs of rhinencephalic nerve complexes (the smell portion of the brain). The relatively undeveloped human olfactory bulbs replace the foetus's highly developed bulbs and rhinencephalon (or smell brain). These highly developed bulbs and nerve structures completely disappear before birth. They exist only in the foetus as vestiges of our evolutionary predecessor's highly developed organs of smell.

## That Clean, Odorless Smell

### Putting Smell in Its Sensory Perspective

Aristotle first defined the five senses of man over three hundred years before Christ. During the twentieth century, the list of senses was slowly extended to include nearly eight times Aristotle's original list and the discovery of additional human sensory inputs into the brain continues. These senses are all interrelated and interconnected. No portion of the brain appears isolated from other portions. The way food "tastes," for example, is partially determined by how it looks, smells, feels, etc., at both conscious and unconscious levels. At the conscious level, the multiple senses appear to operate with a fluctuating bias that continuously shifts from one sense to another while we taste, hear, feel, etc. This bias does not, however, shut off the momentarily unfavored senses, which still convey information to the brain.

Of all senses, smell appears to have the best memory. Virtually anyone perceiving an odor he had not perceived for ten years might very likely recognize the perception instantly, bringing to conscious awareness an avalanche of memories and emotional associations.

Studies of both primitive peoples and unsighted individuals suggest that their olfactory sensitivities are very highly developed. When individuals are forced to depend upon alternative senses, many develop astonishing powers. The sense of smell, of course, cannot be turned off in the way we close our eyes, rinse our mouths, or remove our fingers from an uncomfortable surface. In a way, smell turns itself off or down. Odor intensities diminish after prolonged exposure. This diminishing effect is often referred to as "olfactory fatigue." Virtually any human could comfortably live adjacent to a garbage dump or an open septic tank. Within a few days (or only hours for some individuals), the stench would not be considered objectionable and would soon pass unnoticed.

Smells just do not lend themselves to neat, clear, analytical measurements such as we have constructed for sound and light, though several classification systems are useful in perfumery or other olfactory production areas. A perfumer, for example, must have an intimate working knowledge of between six and eight thousand aromatic substances. Perhaps three thousand odors intermix to form a virtually endless

number of possibilities. Further, each mixture may vary—in the way it is perceived—in relation to sex, age, and physical condition. Heavy or light aromatic concentrations vary perceptual response, as well as such factors as temperature and humidity. Odor intensity increases, for example, as humidity decreases.

Large dung hills from a distance often smell strongly of musk—a pleasant, sexually stimulating aromatic. But at close range, the excremental stink is unbearable. Skunk aroma, for another example, is also a pleasant scent for many people if experienced at a distance.

Several general conclusions appear to emanate from the large collection of animal studies. The sense of smell is vital in food selection and in the avoidance of danger and enemies. And, perhaps most significantly, virtually all species—even those whose sense of smell does not appear highly developed—utilize odors as a basis for social and reproductive behavior.

### Origins of Human Odor

There are two known types of sweat glands in the human body: eccrine glands, which emit an odorless fluid 99 percent water and 1 percent salt; and the apocrine glands, distributed over the body but concentrated in areas such as armpits, genitals, feet, hair, etc., which secrete a sticky, milky fluid that rapidly decomposes, becoming odorous.

Perspiration does not serve to rid the body of wastes. The some 3 million eccrine glands in each human appear to have one major function—the regulation of body temperature. Eccrine sweating, however, can also occur from emotional arousal when the body is not actually overheated.

The infinitesimally smaller number of apocrine glands, on the other hand, are activated only by emotion. Men and women produce about the same quantity of apocrine secretion and odor, though there are subtle differences (sometimes not so subtle) in the odor produced by each individual. The apocrine glands in different parts of the body also produce different odors.

Experimenters have demonstrated that tracking dogs follow

## That Clean, Odorless Smell

human scents that diffuse through footwear. Man, like many mammals, has heavy concentrations of apocrine scent glands on the feet. In a tracking situation, of course, persons under emotional strain perspire more than they would normally.

Apocrine-gland-produced solutions serve to communicate emotional states from individual to individual. And throughout evolution this system of odor communication appears to have had considerable survival value for man.

Sexually mature humans have body odors quite distinct from the immature. Odors are basic to the relationship between child and mother. Heavy concentration of apocrine glands in the mother's nipples strongly stimulates the child in sucking and attachment behavior. Infants can identify their mother's breast and genital odors during their first few weeks of life. Naturalist Charles Darwin collected evidence that odors sensed by infants are capable of producing changes in heart rate and respiration. Three groups of individuals will place any object within reach into their mouths in response to smell stimuli—lobectomized monkeys, healthy infants, and schizophrenics regressed to early childhood.

When a small child thumbsucks while holding on to a baby blanket, the blanket must smell of human odors. Children carefully examine their blankets for a portion with a tranquilizing human smell. Most small children will reject a newly cleaned blanket.

Male silkworms can scent a mate as far as seven miles away. Females of the species, however, are odor-blind to their own powerful aromatic. Females of virtually all species, including humans, appear unaware that their bodies produce powerful, natural, olfactory sexual stimulants.

Physicians often utilize body odor as a basis for medical diagnosis. Many verified cases have been recorded where doctors detected the approach of death through odors, even when pulse, temperature, and patient feelings were not unfavorable. Patients with acidosis and uremia have quite distinctive odors. The odor of leukemia patients has been described as similar to that of "a freshly opened corpse." Chronic schizophrenic patients emit a sweetish odor.

One most curious phenomenon, observed by many scientists, is that sensitivity to smell is often much greater or much less in the United States than in other areas of the world.

Odors appear much more extreme in the U.S. Again, the specific causes are unknown, though they do not appear to involve such things as temperature and humidity.

### Odor Sensitivity

In adult human females, apocrine glands concentrate around the breast nipples and genitals, and secrete butyric acid—an odorant also found in butter and feces. Freud was not the first to recognize that aromatics from hair, feces, and blood have sexually exciting effects upon both male and female children and adults. Recall the Playboy cover (Figure 5) where the disguised little boy sits with his head near his mother's genital area, a pose frequently observable with male children.

Conscious sensitivity to smells increases with age until roughly the sixth year, and appears stronger among girls than boys. Odor sensitivity greatly diminishes in old age (seventy-five and above), but females remain more sensitive than males in old age as in childhood. Usually, however, by the fourth or fifth year, initiation of the Oedipal conflict produces repression of body and other odors associated with the mother. It is an almost universal experience to repress memories of odors related to parental intercourse. Odors heavily charged with sexual implications appear the most completely repressed at each level of psychosexual development

Asthmatics are usually hypersensitive to smells. One major theory of asthma suggests such attacks are defenses against odors that reactivate conflicts that originated in the anal phase of childhood—between the first and third years.

Odors are also known to play a potent emotional role in fetishism. The fetish is often selected because of its odor, usually anal or genital in origin. All this may suggest a theory to explain at least part of the American preoccupation with suppressing and repressing body odors.

Breast worship via such manipulative media as Playboy—and the media induced control or abolition of female body and genital odors—appear as attempts to erase, avoid, or camouflage conscious memories from the early maternal rela-

## That Clean, Odorless Smell

tionship in the interest of commercial product merchandising.

Among the thousands of odors recognized and described by man, perhaps the single most powerful odor known is that of musk. Musk odor, which both consciously and subliminally affects humans, was originally found in the anal glands of the civet cat and musk deer. The odor is detectable by man in quantities as small as .000,000,000,000,032 of an ounce and appears to have aphrodisiac effects upon both animals and humans. Musk odor was later discovered in many plants, more than twenty animal species, birds, mammals, molluscs, reptiles, at least one insect, and is encountered in synthetic chemicals from six or more classes. Musk, of course, is used in many food and cosmetic preparations. Natural musk odor extracts can be detected only by humans who have the animal hormone estrogen in their blood, excluding children and older adults. Perceptual defenses against sexually oriented pleasure through smelling are media encouraged to continue throughout life as a corollary of consumer conditioning. These defenses may take the form of repression as in the conscious unawareness of certain odors, by denial through the use of deodorants, antiperspirants, smell deadeners (anesthesias), or by camouflage—masking with perfumes, colognes, etc.

## Cultures Smell Differently

People's personal odors also vary in relation to their culture. Diet may have something to do with the observable differences, but causes are still uncertain.

A Japanese writer, Adachi, observed that Europeans appeared unaware of their characteristic pungent and rancid odors. European children and old people, he observed, were almost free of the repulsive odor, but he found it especially strong in women. Asiatics seldom have this strong, pungent body odor which originates primarily in the armpits. Japanese young men found to have armpit odor were once exempted from military service. Over the past several centuries, many French writers have alluded to the "odor of the English," which some describe as "most persistent and long-lasting."

Of course, much of human perception, what we take for reality from our sensory inputs, is culture-bound. As the

senses and brain appear to perceive the totality of what is going on around an individual, culture will determine what is consciously perceived and, likewise, excluded from consciousness—what is designated significant and irrelevant.

Most humans seem to prefer floral and fruity odors and dislike odors of putrefaction, though agreement is by no means universal. Many individuals thoroughly enjoy odors of decay in meat and cheese. But what smells "good" among one people may be considered "bad" among another.

It is doubtful that modern, synthetically reprogrammed man could ever completely comprehend the aromatic preferences of primitive man. Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss recorded that Amazonian Indians are particularly susceptible to the natural smells of the human body which civilized man suppresses or camouflages.

In one Urubu tribal myth, Levi-Strauss recorded that God created woman after smelling a rotten fruit full of worms. In the Tacana tribe, a mythological jaguar decided not to rape a woman after perceiving the smell of her vulva which seemed to him to reek of worm-ridden meat—which is, incidentally, an Urubu delicacy. A Mundurucu tribal myth explained that after animals had made vaginas for the first women, the armadillo rubbed each organ with a piece of rotten nut, another dietary delicacy.

These Brazilian Indians appeared to find female odors a source of what could be called affectionate humor. And these putrefaction odors were considered sexually stimulating and not at all "bad." It is even doubtful these primitive peoples (who have survived centuries in environments that would destroy civilized man within days) would find a woman desirable whose vulva was odorless.

The entire rich spectrum of human odor has long been a cherished and meaningful human experience. In the Song of Solomon (7:8) the poet wrote, "Oh, may the scent of your breath be like apples." The scent of natural apples would today most likely be found objectionable, and it would be masked by Binaca, Listerine, Dentine, or Wrigley's. Psalm 115:6 explains why one God is supreme while the many idols are fraudulent: the idols "have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell."

In one of history's most famous love letters, Napoleon

## That Clean, Odorless Smell

wrote his beautiful Empress Josephine, "See you next Thursday. Please don't bathe in the meantime!"

Prior to World War II, deodorants were strictly women's products. There was only one major brand in the limited market—Mum, a symbolically significant brand name. Mum (Mother, of course) was the one who trained her children in infancy to handle their body excretions. In the finest tradition of anal management and control, Mum could now be with the American woman throughout life—always available to protect her from the evils of perspiration.

During World War II, I recall two soldiers, bunking at one end of an Army Air Force barracks, who were discovered using Mum. These soldiers were, because of their concealed jars of Mum, seriously suspected of being homosexuals. At the time, no one knew that a new world of odor fantasy had been initiated. All that was needed for the chemical companies to change our lives was time and heavy advertising budgets.

## The Education in Cleanliness

Pupilometer and Mackworth are two-camera devices which photograph the eye track across a picture or scene as well as the increase or decrease in the size of the pupil in response to what the eye perceives. Studies with them have shown primary focal points in a TV scene are invariably mouths, noses, and eyes (in that order).

As a child (or anyone else) follows the slick continuity of a 30-second commercial, their emotional involvement appears far more intense as they view reaction shots (facial expressions which respond to the action portrayed) than when they are viewing the actual objects or actions portrayed. In other words, Kitty's reaction to something said or done by Matt Dillon creates a much stronger level of emotional involvement within the viewer than does Matt's action itself. (For comparison, note that most cartoons show not merely "funny" behavior, but a character reacting to these events. An on-stage observer somehow is needed to make the joke amusing to an audience.)

In a commercial, an actor's facial reaction to a bad smell projects the smell into the viewer's living room with great

emotional intensity rarely perceived at the conscious level by the audience. When an actor's facial expression in a reaction shot portrays annoyance, disgust, rejection, or pity toward someone with—horror of horrors—body odor, the instantaneous subliminal effect upon viewers is to program their unconscious with a virtual post-hypnotic suggestion for them to react similarly in similar situations. A similar real-life reaction effect, of course, occurs as mothers change diapers or attend the child's needs during infancy.

Likewise, when we are incessantly told by ads, "Don't take chances with body odor!" the conscious fear of body odor is being emphasized as some mysterious danger which threatens our social survival. Constant repetition of the theme will act upon the unconscious much in the same way as would a post-hypnotic suggestion. We will soon, under such a symbolic barrage, become sensitive to others who take chances with body odor. And, though we cannot consciously smell our own bodies (a frustrating problem of body image well understood by the chemical companies), the mere thought of taking such a chance will strike terror deep into the staunchest American heart.

In effect, smell advertising has actually created a widespread sensitivity to body odor. As far as "objectionable" body odors are concerned, apocrine secretions require twelve or more hours to produce heavy decomposition odors—depending upon the body's emotional experience during the period.

Media reinforcement or conditioning is not insignificant for American children between two and six who receive an average of fifty-five hours weekly of television—much of it saturated with advertising for cleanliness or hygiene products aimed at their mothers. It is estimated that an average North American child spends about 11,000 hours in classrooms through grammar, junior high, and senior high schools. During this same period, however, the child will receive over 25,000 hours of TV loaded with subliminal sell techniques.

"Ban takes the worry out of being close," announces their advertising. The statement also initiates or reinforces worry about being close. It might never have occurred to us that we had anything to worry about in being close until several mil-

## That Clean, Odorless Smell

lion dollars' worth of subliminally loaded advertising has hammered the fear into our unconscious.

Deodorants that kill or inhibit bacteria can prevent this odor by not permitting the apocrine fluid to decompose. Antiperspirants, which seal off both types of sweat glands, simply remove the warm moist skin surface where bacteria can multiply. Antiperspirants are merely gluelike chemicals that paste up the sweat gland pores. Odorous perspiration is thus contained in the body. In physiological terms the chemical sealer is probably harmless to most people—though a persistent minority react with allergic reactions or recurrent irritations and infections. Roughly 85 percent of American adults use some form of chemical odor suppressant

## Deodorants as Necessities

According to most medical authorities, a shower once, or possibly twice daily will be entirely adequate to control body odors in a healthy human without recourse to chemical suppressants. But any reader who doubts that deodorants are a necessity to the American life-style is challenged to conduct a simple experiment. Spend a week of your life without deodorants of any type.

A group of volunteer students agreed to stop using deodorants for a week and record their daily reactions. Over half dropped out of the experiment by the third day. They simply couldn't take it. The students admitted to fears of getting close to anyone. All felt very conscious of a sensitivity toward other people's body odors. Throughout their experience, they were "up-tight," "anxious," "apprehensive," "worried," "afraid," "self-conscious," etc., over being rejected by others because of their body odor.

This was, indeed, strange, for each member of the experiment bathed carefully twice daily, in the morning and in the evening. In reality, their bodies were quite clean—soap-and-water clean, that is, but not psychological-fantasy clean. Bristol-Myers, makers of Ban, have actually referred to human perspiration as "obscene," pointing out that people become upset over the sight of a wet armpit—either their own or someone else's. Once you have had it explained by a high

credibility source, the thought of a wet armpit is, in itself, provocation for many to break into a cold sweat.

More than mere perspiration is hidden by deodorants or antiperspirants: the elimination of body odor actually hides our emotional responses from the perception of others, a sure way to avoid letting others know how we feel.

### God's Most Grievous Error

The battle of body odor and unwanted hair, fought diligently these past forty years by chemical and razor-blade companies, has been won in America. American women, with the enthusiastic support of their men, today react nauseously, or uncomfortably at least, even to a discussion of armpit or leg hair.

It is not unreasonable to assume that body hair, like all biological entities, serves some useful function. Evolution has been quite severe in eliminating unnecessary appendages both inside and outside the human body. Neuron endings, within the skin, are unique in areas covered by hair. Haired skin has high concentrations of Krause genital and Iggo corpuscle nerve receptors. The latter, located between hairs, are so sensitive they respond to pressures less than one thousandth of an ounce—about the weight of a mosquito.

Hair, especially underarm hair, persisted throughout evolution as a device for retaining body aromatics related to social and reproductive communication. Hair provides a retention device to hold the aromatics produced by apocrine glands. This may also be the function of leg hair.

Most of the world's women do not shave or use chemical hair removers. Even if they could afford expensive hair-removal products, most women would have a difficult time convincing their men to accept their hairless bodies.

Several years ago, a major razor-blade company probed Latin American women's resistance to body shaving or hair removal. The enormity of ad budgets, the intensity of media saturation, and the creative insights of the most talented writers and artists—after years of trying—had been generally unsuccessful in converting Latin American women into body hair neurotics willing to regularly endure the cuts and burns necessary in order to become "clean." This situation, of

## That Clean, Odorless Smell

course, seriously limited the company's sales and profits. Several thousand consumer interviews began to produce data with unsuspected implications. Hair, in Latin America, has much to do with ethnic identity.

Indians, as is true of many Asiatic peoples, have very little body hair. Indian men usually have light beards. And Indian women's bodies are quite lightly haired.

Many Latin Americans still consider the Indian inferior. One's degree of sangre espanol (Spanish blood)—the degree of white ancestry any individual possesses genetically—is an important cultural consideration in mating games, social acceptance, and economic opportunities. Many Latin American women displayed their sangre espanol via the hair on their legs. In ranking ethnic or racial physical determinants among Latin Americans, hair was most important, facial features secondary, and skin color of much less significance.

At last contact, marketing specialists were hard at work on a way to convince Latin Americans that body hair removal was the "natural" way to determine white ancestry or sangre espanol. It is only a matter of time and advertising media pressure until Latin Americans become culture-trained to perform daily hair-removal rituals in the service of corporate profits.

It might be easy to conclude that maybe all this sexual manipulation is a good thing, considering the already dangerous overpopulation of the world. Sexual behavior, however, involves human emotional health as well as biological reproduction. No one, however, least of all the corporations that have milked millions out of managing America's odors (the United States deodorant market exceeded \$3 billion in 1974) has ever considered the consequences of long-term changes in social and reproductive behavior.

## Odorlessness—the Real Thing?

Air or space deodorants are another technique of culturally managing America's ability to perceive odor. Most of the spray or evaporative air deodorants contain a chemical preservative such as phenol or formaldehyde, volatile chemicals that do not in any way remove odors from the air. They

simply anesthetize human olfactory bulbs. Lysol's curious advertising claims provide an insight into the sterile aromatic environment modern Americans have built for themselves:

"Destroys household germs and odor-causing bacteria. Prevents mildew and mold. Deodorizes and disinfects garbage cans, diaper pails, toilet areas, under sinks, nurseries, sick-rooms, basements, musty corners, and other places where odor-causing germs are a problem.

"To eliminate cooking, smoke, tobacco, bathroom, and other unpleasant household odors ... Leaves a clean, fresh scent. Antigerm actions lasts for days."

Even in an antiseptic operating room environment, germs are reduced, perhaps, but not entirely eliminated. Nor, in the interest of health and resistance to infections, is it desirable to eliminate germs, bacteria, molds, mildew, and other microorganisms that permeate our atmosphere. These organisms are very necessary to human survival.

Uncomfortable though the thought may be, the human digestive tract is loaded with bacteria, germs, and the like—extremely necessary to human health and digestive processes. The assortment of odors that Lysol advertising claims to destroy or eliminate might include some which are vital to emotional as well as physiological health.

Lysol, of course, does not eliminate odors, only an individual's ability to perceive them. Lysol contains phenol, a cell preservative. Enough Lysol in the air will kill or anesthetize cells in the olfactory bulbs and prevent anyone from smelling anything.

Smell dullers or anesthetics involve a large assortment of chemicals—including gasoline, ether, camphor, oil of cloves, and ammonia. Ether and oil of cloves are common scents used in colognes, aftershave lotions, and other cosmetics. The effect of the highly advertised Old Spice cologne aromatic is a reduction in smell sensitivity or olfactory acuity—so that all odors but its own are blotted out for the user.

Ammonia, presently in wide use as an ingredient of household soap, is also claimed to have extraordinary cleansing powers. Nonsense! Ammonia is a deadly poison and in the, very minute quantities used in household cleansers, ammonia's primary purpose is to make the product smell clean by anesthetizing the consumer's olfactory bulbs. Just one whiff of

## That Clean, Odorless Smell

ammonia reduces olfactory acuity by 50 percent for as long as twenty-four hours.

Another antismell product goes even further. Nilodor claims that "if you can smell it, you've used too much." A strong olfactory anesthetic, Nilodor doesn't even include a strong antiseptic smell to camouflage odor molecules that leak through the partially anesthetized olfactory bulbs, as with Lysol. Nilodor extends its advertising claims to include the odor control of such objects of aromatic horrors as "kitty toilet boxes."

These smell-dullers, or so-called space deodorants, have been banned by the Federal Aviation Agency from the flight decks of commercial aircraft as they inhibit the pilot's ability to perceive the plane's odors, which can often warn him of developing danger. Applying an anesthetic to the human smell machinery will, of course, influence all the other senses and their ability to perceive the world around an individual. Flavor, an obvious example, is inextricably connected with smells, as are the other senses. Foods or drinks taste much differently in a room sprayed with formaldehyde.

As a large portion of North America's population has lived in a chemically induced state of bulbectomy or olfactory anesthesia for several generations, it is somewhat unnerving to review the behavior of laboratory animals after their sense of smell was removed through an operation called olfactory bulbectomy—removal of the two smell bulbs.

Bulbectomized gerbils, for example, became docile and refused to fraternize, copulate, or display any kind of aggression, even when attacked by other gerbils. The gerbils\* territorial exploration and mating behavior were completely eliminated. Rats, after bulbectomies, sharply reduced their copulatory behavior. Learning behavior also virtually ceased, and female rats became highly emotional.

Some rats kill mice on sight; others do not. After bulbectomizing both killer and nonkiller rats, nonkillers became killers.

In both nursing and virgin female mice, maternal behavior was eliminated. In fact, all eighteen of the nursing female mice studied ate their young after bulbectomies. Sexual behavior in both male mice and golden hamsters was totally eliminated after bulbectomies.

Many qualifications were placed upon the findings from the bulbectomy experiments. Results appeared consistent in one species, but reversed themselves in another.

Nevertheless, one specific conclusion was most abundantly clear—social and reproductive behavior in all the test animals were severely upset by removing their sense of smell. Readers' should carefully weigh the obvious conclusion: By reducing the American aromatic environment to a flat level of barely perceptible or imperceptible smells, the full, natural range of human sensory experience and the subtle—though important—nuances of olfactory communication are severely inhibited.

Unless further research proves otherwise, it seems likely that bulbectomy or olfactory anesthesia will induce (or may have already induced) major changes in human social and reproductive (sexual) behavior. The Federal Food and Drug Administration, Federal Trade Commission, Federal Communications Commission, and the other agencies of government, charged with protecting the public health have their hands full simply trying to keep profit-hungry corporations from chemically poisoning the population. As yet, no one has even remotely considered psychogenic damage.

### Early No-Smell Conditioning

It would not be at all unreasonable to conclude that many millions of North Americans have little, if any, knowledge of what they or the natural environment smells like. In our society, babies are usually born into sterile, disinfected, deodorized hospitals. The baby's first breath in the delivery room is air well synthesized with artificial aromatics and smell-dullers. Even their mothers are carefully shaved, washed, and deodorized with hexachlorophene and other chemical antiseptics and; deodorizers.

Once the baby is at home, the acculturation process begins in earnest. The baby is immersed in an environment of synthetic aromatics and smell-anesthetizers. Advertising-trained mothers, whose own mothers were advertising-trained must reject their child's natural smells. The advertising culture will not permit a mother to accept the natural scents of the child

## That Clean, Odorless Smell

to which she gave birth. Fathers, of course, have been similarly brainwashed.

Under the adult's flow of baby talk and verbal adulation, a child will easily sense parental anger, frustration, or disapproval. Should a parent even slightly express disappointment, the child is quite likely to perceive the negative reaction. And, it is impossible for such odor-trained adults to avoid negative reactions.

Many observers have pointed out that children under five in America find sweat, fecal, and urinary aromas quite pleasant and appealing. After five years, however, they appear to succumb to cultural conditioning and react negatively to aromas, which they have been conditioned to fear as unclean.

## Negative Self-Images

Body image is something each individual develops from birth. Children raised in the American Clean are indelibly imprinted with a negative view of themselves as producers of unpleasant odors. By capitalizing upon the created fear of what we cannot perceive with our unaided senses—germs, viruses, and bacteria, those invisible, omnipresent enemies always out there somewhere waiting for a chance to spring at us when we least expect an attack—a form of olfactory paranoia has been nourished.

This one giant step toward the dehumanization of mankind was taken years ago with everybody congratulating themselves upon how good their world smelled once it was rid of odor.

# The Exorcist Massage Parlor

Necrophilia, the attraction to what is dead, decaying, lifeless, and purely mechanical, is increasing throughout our cybernetic industrial society.

The Falangist motto, "Long live death," threatens to become the secret principle of a society in which the conquest of nature by the machine constitutes the very meaning of progress, and where the living person becomes an appendix to the machine.

ERICH FROMM

The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness

## Audience Priming

The Exorcist dramatically proved—if this needed proving—that the motion picture industry was not averse to making a fast buck with subliminal technology. Director William Friedkin maximized the return on the film's capital investment, reportedly in the neighborhood of \$14 million, through

## The Exorcist Massage Parlor

a brilliant repertoire of visual and auditory subliminal innovations.

The Exorcist was not the first motion picture to use subliminal techniques. In 1957, the Precon Process and Equipment Corporation of New Orleans produced two experimental films heavily saturated with subliminal devices—*My World Dies Screaming* and *A Date with Death*. Neither film was ever publicly released. Friedkin must have used these films as a textbook.

The Exorcist audience was first primed or preconditioned for the subliminally induced emotional trip by the film's publicity: "The Exorcist is more than just a novel. A nightmare novel of demonic possession. See the movie! It's the most shocking thing that will ever happen to you!" warned Warner Brothers' promotional materials.

Preconditioning was apparent while audiences waited for the show to begin. Virtually everyone was on the edge of their seats. Conversations appeared nervous, laughter forced, and talk was often quite loud. Interviews indicated almost everyone had the same apprehensive thought, wondering how they would be affected by the film. When the lights finally dimmed and the curtain parted, the audience seemed to be holding their breaths in anticipation.

In technical terms, this priming experience is important to produce the most ideal perceptual conditions for subliminal stimuli. Yet, most of the priming publicity was absurd, the usual contrived nonsense—in this case overtly appealing to childlike fantasies of witches and evil forces. However, the public's reaction—as the film opened in major cities across the nation—was genuine. People really did faint in large numbers, many more became nauseous in varying degrees, a great many more had very disturbing nightmares. Several theater employees—in the theaters where interviews were taken—were actually placed under the care of physicians, and a few quit their jobs. Employees frequently had to clean up floors and rugs when nauseous patrons (mostly male, for some reason) did not quite make it to the rest rooms. In the several cities that were checked after the film had run several weeks, every major hospital receiving department had dealt with dozens of fainting, nausea, and hysteria cases. Hospital

emergency room physicians reported patients who appeared to be both hallucinating and extremely distraught.

Nine psychiatrists in a midwestern city, who agreed to be interviewed, reported they had all counseled disturbed patients who displayed "hysteria" as a result of the movie, ranging from one to eighteen patients for each psychiatrist.

There is virtually no way cognitive or consciously perceived stimuli could have produced this intensity of emotional disturbance. Human perceptual defenses are very well organized and will protect individuals from most potentially disturbing experiences. Even the dramatic illusions of Cinerama, when first introduced some years ago, produced only mild nausea or dizziness among a small handful of theater patrons.

### The Poetzle Effect

Out of fifty individuals in a test group who saw the movie, only three could recall subsequent dreams that in any way appeared related over several weeks after the screening. Dr. O. Poetzle, one of Freud's contemporaries, postulated in his Law of Exclusion that dream content was comprised of subliminal or unconsciously perceived experiences. He demonstrated that dream data was often transformed or disguised within a familiar setting, but the dream's "real" content was derived from subliminal rather than cognitive or conscious perceptions.

Around 1917, Poetzle developed his subliminal stimuli theories from studies utilizing tachistoscopic displays and hypnosis. He was the first scientist to demonstrate the apparently close relationship between subliminal stimuli and posthypnotic suggestion. The Poetzle Effect involves a delayed action, or as he called it, a "time clock" phenomenon. His studies revealed that subliminal perceptions could evoke dreams and actions days, even weeks, after the original percept.

When individuals perceive a subliminal stimuli in print or in television advertising, they are consciously unaware of the percept. These hidden devices usually involve taboo sex or death content which program some individuals for the delayed reaction. Several weeks later, these sensitive individuals will notice the brand label in a supermarket. This second

## The Exorcist Massage Parlor

conscious percept serves as a cue for action. Applying the Poetzel theorizations, a statistically significant proportion of consumers will purchase the product or dream about it after the second percept.

Several weeks after our test group had seen *The Exorcist*, photographic slides taken of the screen during the movie were shown.

Scenes included the actors' faces, staircases inside and outside the house, and the exorcism. The slide show lasted an hour, during which time several people left the room, reporting they had become nauseous. Almost the entire group reported severe depression after the showing. Many were openly annoyed at having to experience the slides. Comments included feelings of "agitation," "anger," "rage," "persecution," "fear," "extreme annoyance," "upset stomach," etc.

During the following week, well over half the group reported nightmares—unusual and vivid horror dreams clearly related to the movie. Many dreamed they were tortured and persecuted by the devil in one way or another. Several young women reported dreaming of sexual experiences involving the devil.

These effects were remarkable because this entire group had been involved with studies on subliminal phenomena for nearly two years. They generally knew how to discover and assess subliminal embeds and, at least from theory, understood the process and how it operated. Even so, it appeared they could not defend themselves from subliminal stimuli effects.

## Media Psychopathology

The Toronto Medical Post reported, after *The Exorcist* had been shown for several weeks in that city, at least four young women had been confined for varying periods in a psychiatric hospital as a result of viewing the film. Subliminal induction techniques are capable of inducing various levels of depression and hysteria among some individuals. A majority of the film's audience would probably experience only momentary emotional unpleasantness. It might appear to some as even exciting. For a small minority, nevertheless, *The Exorcist* could indeed be threatening or even dangerous.

There is little psychological threat to an individual from anything consciously perceived. At the conscious level, humans can decide alternatives and rationalize their involvements in terms of morality, self interest, or conscious motives. The whole pornography issue, for example, is totally absurd. As long as an individual can decide consciously whether he will accept, refect, or consider, there is really no such thing as "harmful" information content.

Subliminal stimuli, on the other hand, are far more insidious and believed responsible for attitudinal frames of reference, moods, emotional predispositions, and residual value systems. There is no possibility of rational decision making or defense, since consciousness is bypassed completely.

One of the most dramatic visual subliminal stimulation techniques in *The Exorcist* featured full-screen tachistoscopic displays. Numerous times during the movie there was a sudden flash of light and the face of Father Karras momentarily appeared as a large, full-screen death mask apparition—the skin greasy white, the mouth a blood-red gash, the face surrounded by a white cowl or shroud.

Muriel Schwartz, owner of the Capitol Theatre in Dover, Delaware, refused to permit a public examination of the film, but "out of curiosity" agreed to check it out herself. She bad a projectionist unwind the reels to Father Karras's dream sequence and discovered a subliminal cut. "The face was a ghostly white," she explained, "with red outlines around the eyes and mouth." One of her employees saw the cut as "the face of the devil." She said the subliminal cut consisted of two frames spliced into the film.

Warner Brothers, who produced the film, refused to comment about the subliminal cuts but admitted their existence, claiming, "We thought everyone knew." One of Director Friedkin's assistants, Albert Shapiro, conceded, "It's not common knowledge that the film contains subliminal cuts." He denied their use in *The Exorcist* was a secret, however.

Despite their claim that they had nothing to hide, I was refused permission to reproduce six photographs for this book, taken in the theater during the movie. Warner's Chief Legal Counsel responded, "You are hereby notified that no license or permission is given for the use of any . . . photographs

## The Exorcist Massage Parlor

taken of or from our motion picture 'The Exorcist.' You are further notified that Warner Bros. will take all legal steps necessary to prevent any such use of materials from 'The Exorcist,' whether such use is made by you or others."

The death mask was most often consciously perceived in two specific scenes. It appeared in the dream sequence, when Father Karras's mother came out of the subway entrance as he watched from across the street, and near the end of the exorcism after the older priest died and Karras attempted to murder Regan. The display flashed at 1/48 of a second. Many viewers believed the death mask flashes occurred at least four additional times, but there was disagreement over precisely in which scenes the flashes had been inserted. At the movie's climax, when Father Karras was finally possessed by the devil, his face turned white—closely resembling the tachistoscoped death mask.

After interviewing nearly a hundred individuals who had just viewed *The Exorcist*, it appeared that roughly one third consciously did not perceive the flashing death mask. One third were strangely uncertain whether they had seen it, and one third consciously recalled the display. Two thirds of the audience did not perceive the death mask. Many who consciously perceived the death mask, commented about forcing themselves to deal with their memory of the experience. Perhaps strangely, the movie's strongest emotional impact was among the one third who repressed the perception and consciously believed they saw nothing.

Tachistoscopic technique is long established and frequently used in television commercials. In a recent case, presently under investigation by the FCC and FTC, half a dozen single frames in a sixty-second commercial for a child's toy called "Husker Du?" were inserted with the command "Get it!" The commercial was nationally broadcast during children's programs before Christmas in 1973.

Two patents on subliminal induction equipment—including the tachistoscope—are owned by Dr. Hal Becker of Tulane University's Medical School. Dr. Becker, a biological communication engineer, has used these induction techniques to treat psychoneurosis. He claims to have lowered diastolic blood pressure (hypertension) with subliminal tachistoscopic dis-

plays. Slow-speed consciously perceivable tachistoscopes, ranging from 1/10 to 1/150 of a second, are regularly used in language training programs. High-speed tachistoscopes, however, flash images or commands at 1/1,000 to 1/4,000 of a second, repeating the flash every so many seconds. Currently, these machines are employed in universities, research corporations, and advertising agencies, but are generally considered obsolete as a practical tool of market manipulation. Subliminal messages can be induced into an audience in much simpler, cheaper, and far less detectable ways.

### Perceptual Threshold Management

Director Friedkin and his behavior experts would have found it dangerous to their \$ 14 million investment if they had brought a tachistoscope anywhere near an American theater. They arrived at a much better solution.

Buried within the experimental literature of psychology are experiments dealing with what is called perceptual threshold, an imaginary line that divides a percept into either conscious or unconscious awareness in the brain. This line appears to move about continuously. As we have already considered, humans perceive much information about which they have no conscious awareness.

Theorists speculate that as little as 1/1,000 of a total, single percept registers at the conscious level. The division of information into conscious and unconsciously perceived information is separated by what we can call the perceptual threshold. Substantial experimental data suggests physiological tension, anxiety, fear, and apprehension control perceptual thresholds. As tension within a person increases, he perceives less and less at the conscious level and becomes more and more susceptible to subliminal stimuli. As these tensions decrease, individuals perceive a wider range of information at conscious levels, and appear less susceptible to subliminals. The harder you strain to perceive subliminals, for example, the less likely you are to perceive them.

The tension phenomenon is easily demonstrated. When ready for bed, adjust the radio volume to a comfortable level—neither too soft nor too loud. Lie down and turn off the light. During the next half hour you will readjust the vol-

## The Exorcist Massage Parlor

ume lower and lower every few minutes to maintain a comfortable volume level. As you relax, the radio volume appears to increase, but it is actually your conscious perceptual ability that changes, becoming more sensitive, not the radio. Should you turn on the light, get up, and walk about the room, you would discover the radio will have become barely audible.

The subliminal death mask cut in *The Exorcist* passes through the projector at 1/48 of a second, a speed quite visible at the conscious level to most people who are relaxed. However, the audience's tension or anxiety level was intensified just before the display was used. As mentioned earlier, two thirds of *The Exorcist* audience did not consciously perceive the death masks. Further, what is not consciously perceived appears far more significant to emotional and attitudinal predispositions than what is consciously evaluated.

### Symbolism's Subliminal Induction

Another embedding technique used frequently in *The Exorcist* was demonstrated in the scene where the old priest is sitting on the bed in the cold bedroom. As his breath condensed, a ghostly face appeared momentarily in the cloud. The face, apparently drawn on several frames, was also consciously invisible to the audience.

There was much more in *The Exorcist*, however, than merely tachistoscopic and embedded death masks.

In a society where science and technology had become generally accepted as the new religion, it was astonishing how easily the writers and director discredited science and established the devil as an almost preferable alternative. Many viewers described the fantasy destruction of neurological medicine in the clinic scenes as the most "horrifying" portion of the movie. Count was made in several theaters of patrons, leaving for the bathroom or the street during this scene, and in packed theaters, it was never fewer than fifty.

The white, sterile operating rooms, the spinal tap, the injection of radioactive iodine in Regan's neck artery, and the overamplified and quite overdramatized clanking of the X-ray machines helped portray Regan as a pale, trembling, weak, and helpless child in the clutches of impersonal, mechanical contrivances. After the clinic scene, the audience was

prepared to accept the devil by comparison as a kindly, even though a somewhat dirty, old man.

The scene that supplied the coup de grace for science involved the various physicians with their stilted, insincere jargon, lightly camouflaging their ignorance and pedanticism. Unfortunately, there was enough truth in the caricature of modern commercial medicine to make the scene plausible.

### The Wipe-out of Reason

One strong factor supporting the movie's success involved an almost primal urge in modern man to believe in the forces of mercy, goodness, and God—even though faith in these concepts has become increasingly difficult to maintain. Many viewers responded to criticisms of the film's fantasy devil being childish nonsense as though their belief in God had been attacked. Though most churches in North America publicly took a strong, antagonistic position toward the movie, many viewers strangely perceived *The Exorcist* as a denouement of material values and a return to religious faith.

The *Exorcist* writers established greater credibility for the devil by representing the story's lead characters as agnostic. Had Regan or her mother, Chris MacNeil, been Catholic, for example, many Protestants, the primary North American audience, might easily have avoided accepting the story. On the other hand, had these two characters been Protestant, it would have put them in the position of being saved from the devil by Catholics—hardly an acceptable idea for most American Protestants.

Further establishing the mother as a credible image in the audience fantasies, the writers made her a glamorous movie and television star who had dined at the White House. Her home was compulsively clean and neat. Though objects were heavily scattered throughout the house on shelves and tables, they were always neat, precise, and never handled or disturbed. In contrast, the urination scene was even more upsetting in this overly neat, tastefully decorated home where toilets never appeared—even in the several bathroom scenes. The urine, of course, was heavily soaped out of the rug by a cleaning woman immediately after the party.

The downstairs was always orderly and clean, and events

that occurred downstairs appeared reasonable and logical. Upstairs, however, was another story. Regan, in her solitary confinement with the devil, was in chaotic surroundings where vomit and drooling spit played upon audience disgust and revulsion toward bodily secretions. This was truly the North American fantasy of what the devil's world would be like. Some, at the unconscious level, however, might have found the disorder attractive.

### Between Heaven and Hell

Stairs were important props in *The Exorcist*, symbolic of limbo—the connection between the lower and upper worlds of hell and heaven. Stairs appeared in Father Karras's dream sequence where his mother emerged from a subway station (symbolically hell), behind the house where the motion picture director and Father Karras fell to their deaths, and as the link between the troubled upstairs world invaded by the devil and the downstairs world of reason and sanity. The attic stairs leading up to a dark room cluttered with half-forgotten junk carried Chris to her first contact with the devil.

The outside death stairs were inspected by the detective who climbed from the dark shadowy bottom, where the director perished, to the top which is portrayed in sunlight and openness (symbolically heaven). The priest finally committed suicide by throwing himself out the window, falling at the foot of these stairs. Suicide, of course, is a mortal sin for which the Church must deny the sacraments. Father Karras had, indeed, surrendered himself to the devil.

The staircase in the house, however, was the symbolic fulcrum around which the story evolved. The ascendant devil was living, temporarily, upstairs in Regan's body. The priests had to climb up to do combat with him. And they had to wait on the stairs until the devil was ready.

Various sexual perversions, strongly taboo in the American culture, were cleverly incorporated into the film. Pedophilia, for example (the use of children for sexual stimulation), was a paramount subliminal theme carefully arranged so the audience would not consciously deal with the forbidden subject. Unconscious perception, as pointed out earlier, is peculiarly sensitive to both sex and death taboos.

In the movie, Regan was twelve years old. Her language and actions—genital exposure, masturbation, etc.—were sexually provocative. Throughout much of the movie, she was posed spread-eagled and tied to the bedposts in bondage. Her movements were often quite purposely sensual. As the wounds opened on her arms and legs, they appeared as lash cuts inflicted with a whip. There was even the sound of a whiplash as these wounds appeared. The cut on her leg, however, was also reminiscent of a vagina—the slang terms "gash" and "slit" suggest that the unconscious may associate wounds with the female genitals.

Sadomasochistic themes were quite obvious and shocking, though most viewers repressed the highly taboo real meanings of these scenes. The use of strong taboo sexual symbolism throughout *The Exorcist* was striking. In the attic scene Regan's mother held a candle that ejaculated a burst of flame when the caretaker surprised her. The bedposts in Regan's room cast phallic shadows on the walls.

Other subs simply emphasized supernatural themes. Some bedroom shadows appeared as dark silhouettes of hooded figures like the statues in the Iraq archaeological museum. Many ancient beliefs persist that creatures of hell, such as vampires and demons, cast no reflection. The house was full of mirrors. They appeared in every room, yet Regan's reflection never appeared as she walked in front of the mirrors.

While Father Karras prays in church, a skull-shaped shadow appeared on the white wall behind him. In the hospital scenes Regan's skull appeared repeatedly in the X rays forming the scene's background. During the exorcism scene, Regan rises from the bed with her arms outstretched in the symbol of the cross.

## The Devil in Pursuit

Director Friedkin confronts the audience with figure-ground actions that keep them in constant uncertainty and tension. Many viewers approached hypnotic states because of the concentration required to follow the ambiguity. In many scenes it was impossible to be completely certain as to which action was intended as figure and which was intended as ground.

**Jantzen looks for you.**

To make a joint statement in  
garrison red, white and blue,  
Now, on the wings of CP Air,  
we capture ourselves a  
piece of  
beach where  
you can watch  
the sun go by.  
Marching  
Jantzen  
fashions of  
Cotton Stretch  
Nylon. The  
All Canadian  
management at  
better stores  
everywhere.  
About \$7.20  
for this and  
\$12.00 for  
shorts.



April 72  
Hil's Digest

**Jantzen**

figure 1

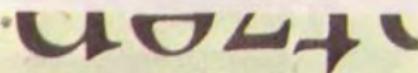


figure 2

# Rufus Phillips for Congress



figure 3



figure 4

ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEN

APRIL 1967 • 75 CENTS

# PLAYBOY

SPRING & SUMMER

FASHION FORECAST

A PLAYBOY INTERVIEW

WITH ANITA SPENCE

A NUDE POSE FOR

PATRICK BY THE YEAR

THE WAY TO END THE

WEEKEND RECOMMENDED

BY BISHOP PAUL JACK

(BREWER, PETE ANDREWS,



figure 5

FOR THE MAN OF THE WORLD



figure 6



figure 7



figure 8



figure 9

figure 10



figure 11

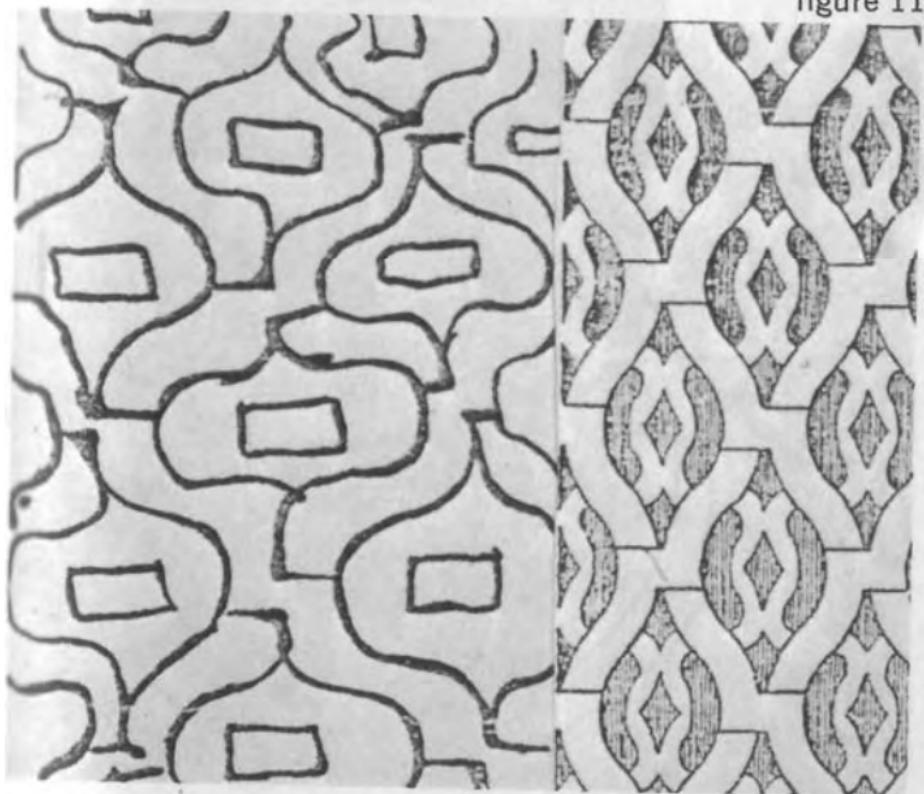


figure 12



figure 13

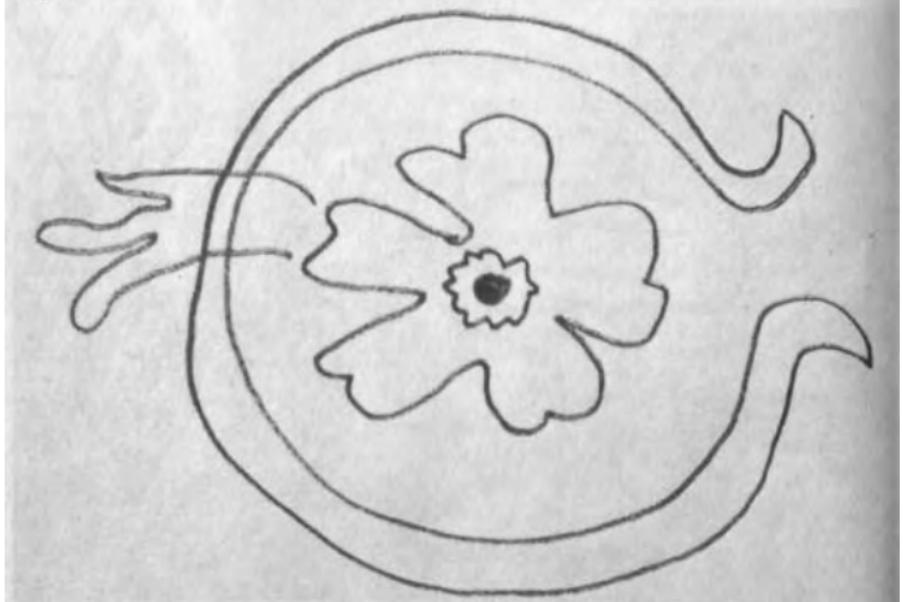


figure 14



figure 15



figure 16

*Even Herbie Can't Get  
Enough of Bahama One Island*  
By: M. Alton, Styling: Eileen A. Rogers  
Photo: David Cat Island, Long Island,  
Jamaica, Bahamas, And many  
more from The Bahamas One Island  
Photo Collection. And one person  
in all the One Island Photo Collection  
is Diane Miller.

From our Bahama One Island  
Collection (page 1) photo.

Everyone who loves big business,  
travel, writing, shopping, art, among  
others, "Taste" Book. And it's from  
Diane Miller's Bahama One Island  
Photo Collection. And one person  
in all the One Island Photo Collection  
is Diane Miller.

"Nightly Light" in the Photo Collection



I feel I've spent my whole life alone.



What pictures worth a million words?



This is where makes the coming up fast.

**PECK & PECK**

© 1970, Peck & Peck Inc.

Bahama One Island. Not just the sea.  
Not just the beauty, not just the  
sunshine. But the Bahama One Island  
Collection. Whether the Bahama One Island  
Clothing, or Sunbeam Bed Sheets,  
Miami, Florida. What there is  
all year round.

From our Bahama One Island  
Collection. Daily Wear patterns  
plus a complete playground top. Black  
sheer organza evening gowns. All of  
them so soft, bright. Cotton sleep  
bedding in a beautiful new White  
and Sunbeam Bed Sheets. All  
from the Bahama One Island  
Collection. They might make  
you a little nervous at the top of  
your stairs. But when you're  
driving along, with 20 miles to go,

"Nightly Light" in the Photo Collection

Diane Miller's Bahama One Island  
Photo Collection.



Remember the way it should have been.



Moscow. It's the outside of emotion.



How do you photograph a feeling?

**PECK & PECK**

© 1970, Peck & Peck Inc.

figure 17



figure 18

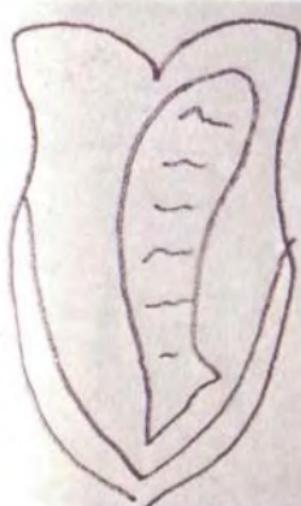


figure 19

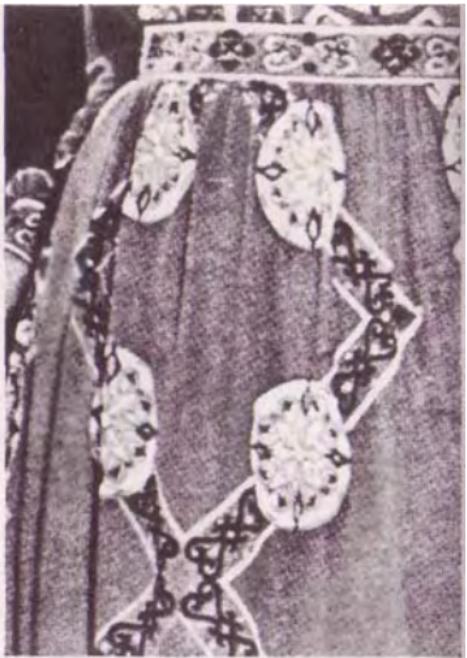


figure 20

figure 21





figure 22



figure 23

figure 24

## THE BOOK IS YOURS TO DO WHAT YOU WANT WITH.

Just about any number you want is in the book - a flick of the page and you've found it. But you can make it even easier. Circle names. Bend over corners. Write in the margins and make red marker slashes against the numbers you just never seem to remember. Because the busier your directory looks, the harder it works for you.

### FRONT PAGE NEWS. Want to know where to report trouble on your line? Long distance directory assistance? Area codes? Even the best long distance bargains? Look to the front first. It's all in the book.

### THE LITTLE BIG BOOK Because you'll feel silly carrying our big book in your pocket or purse, we've made a small one for the numbers you call a lot. Put our business office number in it too - so you can call for more free copies if you need them!

figure 26



figure 27





figure 28

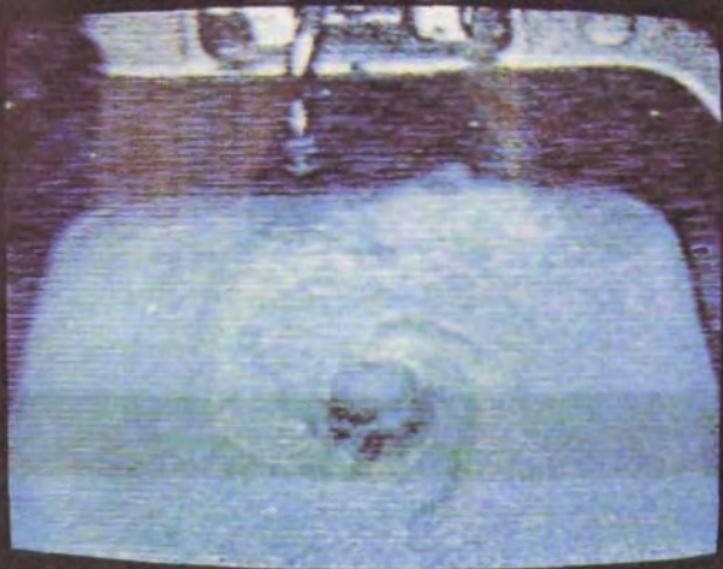


figure 29



figure 30

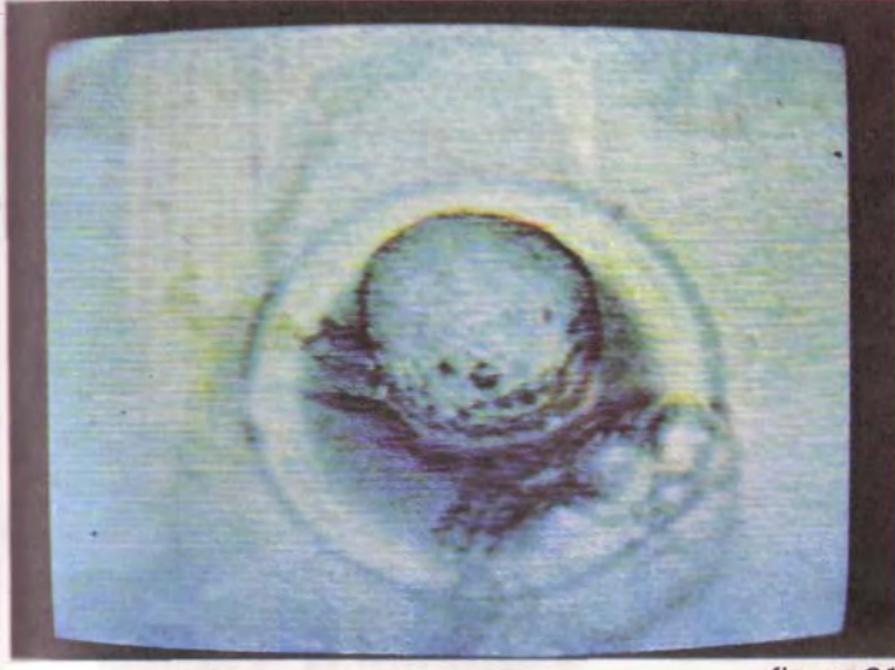


figure 31



figure 32



**NEW...**  
**FIRST SKIN CREAM**  
**THAT EVEN PROTECTS**  
**YOUR HANDS IN WATER**

figure 33



figure 34

EVERY YEAR YOU GIVE GIFTS  
AS A TRADITION.  
THIS YEAR GIVE A TRADITION  
AS A GIFT.



figure 35

ENGLAND  
May 1978

Getting the rocks in the Johnnie Walker Red bottle  
is a lot easier than getting  
the Johnnie Walker Red in the bottle.



Only a master blender with years of priceless knowledge can make every single drop of Johnnie Walker Red taste the same year after year.

He has to have over forty of Scotland's finest whiskies at his command all of the time to achieve the smooth, satisfying flavor that has made this the world's favorite bottle of Scotch.

Anybody with a bottle cutter can get the rocks in.

Say "Johnnie Walker Red." You won't get it by just saying "Scotch."

figure 36



This... is the **L&M** moment.



figure 38



figure 39

This... is the **L&M** moment.



figure 40

figure 41



figure 42



figure 43

## When Paul and his grandparents have the same problem...



A gentle yet stimulating cream developed by Magistral  
the professional training division of the cosmetics  
industry for Paul, young enough for his grandparents  
to hold and surrounded by his J. Magistral  
parents. For the first time in history, J. Magistral  
Magistral goals for work, mobility and efficiency  
in action. Day and night of comfort, and no  
problem remains - whether involving the control  
of skin, hair or nails. J. Magistral, Magistral  
and J. Magistral - the best for adults.

At Whipple we wish you well.

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towers  
DEPARTMENT STORES

100% Polyester  
Lots of flair  
In easy care  
Wash n' Wear

Satin Miss Tops in Polyester  
3.88 6.88

2 Great Pant Styles in  
Immediate Polyester  
4.88 6.88

Grace Pant Knit  
3.88

Roser and Betty Panted Hammie Dress  
4.48



figure 45

figure 44



figure 46



figure 47



figure 48

figure 49



## The Exorcist Massage Parlor

For example, Father Karras walked through the streets to his mother's apartment. Children were playing in the road and in wrecked cars, symbolizing the end of technology. As these scenes cut back and forth, the viewer became quite distracted and more intensely vulnerable to the specific mother-and-son scene that followed. In this scene, introducing Father Karras's guilt over his treatment of Ms mother, appeared the final justification for the devil's pursuit of Father Karras through the child Regan.

The quick-cut transitions in and out of seemingly unrelated scenes formed a mosaic of visual impression that in the advertising business are called the McLuhan Effect or perceptual overload. Familiar examples of the technique are Coca-Cola TV commercials where as many as four scenes are shown in a single frame, different actions continuing in each element of the frame. It is impossible to consciously make sense out of what is going on. The audience's consciousness has been overloaded in order to bypass it into the unconscious, which easily processes very large quantities of data, storing it for later feedback into consciousness.

Director Friedkin heavily utilized subliminal continuity devices that tied the entire film together, in the audience psyche, into a tight, integrated package. For example, the old woman in the carriage that almost ran down the old priest, Father Merrin, had a quickly exposed face similar to Regan's during the exorcism. Father Merrin took a pill after the incident with the carriage, presumably for a cardiac condition, just as he did later in the Georgetown bathroom before the exorcism.

When the old priest moved toward the stopped clock in the Iraq museum, a single pink rose appeared in a white teapot on a table. In the apartment of Father Karras's mother, the wallpaper was covered with pink roses, as was the wallpaper in the bedroom of Regan's mother. There was a single pink rose in the sugar bowl in the apartment of the priest's mother. When Regan urinated on the rug, her mother, Chris, was holding a pink rose. The downstairs of the Georgetown house was full of flowers, suggesting a funeral was taking place. Flowers, of course, are the plant's reproductive organ and symbolize both death and resurrection. In Renaissance art, flowers often represented the soul.

## Auditory Archetypes

The Exorcist was remarkable in the way both audio and visual were integrated and mutually reinforced. The sound track, for which the movie won an Academy Award, was a brilliant example of creative subliminal sound engineering. Similar techniques have been used for years in other movies and by the popular music recording industry.

In several dozen interviews with theater employees—refreshment stand attendants, ushers, and ticket takers who had only heard the movie's sound track for several days before actually viewing the film, all reported extreme discomfort from the sound. The discomfort could not be verbally explained, but all agreed it was directly related to the sound track. Each of the theater staffs interviewed reported employees who became ill after finally seeing the film in its entirety—from mild to extreme nausea and hysteria.

Friedkin openly admitted he had used several natural sound effects in the movie's auditory background. One of these, he explained, was the sound of angry, agitated bees. After provoking a jar of bees into excited anger, he recorded their buzzing, then rerecorded the buzzing at sixteen different frequencies. He finally mixed the sixteen frequencies of buzzing together in what might be consciously heard as a single sound—a super buzzing of infuriated bees virtually unrecognizable at conscious levels. This sound of angry bees wove in and out of scenes throughout the film.

Virtually all humans (some much more strongly than others) respond with hysteria, fear, and intense anxiety to the sound of angry, buzzing bees, even if they have never in their lives experienced the actual sound. Many animals respond similarly. Perhaps the strongest verbally definable emotion triggered by the bee buzzing is fear or fright—a near panic-filled desire to run, flee, and escape from the threat. Carl Jung's theory of archetypes suggests that this sound—as the emotional reaction appears to cross cultures—could qualify as an archetypal symbol.

In many cultures the bee has been symbolically associated with death and immortality. In several ancient civilizations, dead bodies were smeared with honey as food for the soul. Indeed, honey was often used as an embalming fluid. Over

many centuries in Europe, bees were prohibited from use in barter for fear they might take offense and destroy crops and flocks in retribution. Bees appeared as symbols of death, fear, and power in ancient Egypt, Germany, China, Greece, Italy, and Japan, in early Christian art, in both Hebrew and Moslem traditions, and in Norse mythology. The Hindu god Krishna was often described as hovering in the form of a bee. Souls have often been thought to swarm as bees migrating from hives.

There is never any conscious awareness, of course, within The Exorcist audience of angry bees buzzing. However, there are easily observable levels of anxiety produced by the sound as it weaves in and out of various scenes. The bee sound appeared, for example, in the scene where Father Merrin first visits Regan's bedroom while he removed various objects from a pouch, symbolically letting the invisible bees out of the bag.

### Symbols of Evil

Another auditory archetype mixed subtly into the sound track was the terrified squealing of pigs while they were being slaughtered. Few sounds strike terror so deeply into the heart of man. This sound will affect virtually all humans even though they may never have experienced the squealing or sight of an actual pig. The expression "squealing like a stuck pig" has even gone into the language.

Pigs have been portrayed in various symbolic relationships with man for at least half a million years. Even today, the pig is considered one of the most intelligent of domestic animals—by human standards, of course. The pig, at least for modern man, was cursed by bad table manners that emphasize the pig's filth, greed, gluttony, and lethargy. Nevertheless, in many ancient cultures, pigs were often substituted for human victims during religious sacrifices. A black pig has often been symbolic in Christian art of the devil and Satan. In many civilizations the pig was thought to be a demon that injured fertility heroes in the groin, rendering them sterile. In Celtic mythology pigs were even portrayed as returning to life after being eaten. And, of course, in one of the New Testament's most celebrated exorcisms, Christ drove a legion

of devils into a herd of swine which, maddened, threw themselves into a lake much as Father Karras flung his possessed body out the window.

In addition to the pigs' squealing hidden in The Exorcist sound track, Regan's grotesque, filthy face during the exorcism scene often resembled that of a pig. Further, subliminal reinforcement for the pig symbol is obtained by the word PIG written as graffiti on a ledge at the left side of the stairs looking down behind the house where the deaths occurred. This staircase, and the consciously unnoticed word PIG, appeared many times throughout the movie. Friedkin explained how the sound track often mixed the angry bee buzz with the pig squeals. The two sounds wove in and out of the film, co-ordinating with the visual.

Embedded in the sound, under the voices and surface sounds apparent in the exorcism scene, was what seemed to be the roaring of lions or large cats. A third of the audience surveyed described a feeling of being devoured or struggling against being devoured. There were also orgasmic sexual sounds in the exorcism scene that appeared to involve both males and females.

Sound is extremely important in the management and control of any group of individuals, certainly for those in a theater. Famed movie director Alfred Hitchcock ranked sound as more vital to the success of his famous suspense movies than his visual illusions.

In a recent Muzak Corporation advertisement, the company actually presented its services, background music for stores and offices, as an "environmental management" technique.

In Western society surprisingly little is publicly known about sound and its effect upon behavior. The consciously available portion of sound frequency ranges from 20 to 20,000 cycles per second—or so advertise the high-fidelity appliance manufacturers. Most theaters have sound equipment that will produce audible sound in this range. As a practical matter, however, few individuals can consciously hear over 17,000 cps or under 200 cps, especially young people whose hearing has been permanently damped by high-volume electronic amplification.

Sound, nevertheless, can be perceived at each end of the

spectrum beyond the consciously perceived frequencies. Resonance and other sound qualities also play parts in the subliminal perception of sound. To illustrate, some Moog synthesizers are capable of producing sound at 20,000 cps or higher and under 20 cps. You can consciously hear nothing at these high or low frequencies, but if volume or resonance is increased, most people become extremely agitated. If information is included in these subliminal frequencies, it will instantly be perceived at the unconscious level.

### Hypnotic Inductions

When normal voice volume levels in *The Exorcist* were reduced, the audience was required to strain or increase attention or concentration upon the dialogue. This is almost a standard hypnotic induction technique, compelling the subject to concentrate upon one sensory data source. The audience uniformly leaned forward in their seats to hear, for example, the charming conversation between mother and daughter in the bedroom scene at the film's beginning. Similarly, many scenes throughout the movie were momentarily out of focus. Again, the audience—like puppets being manipulated with strings—leaned forward, concentrating on the visual images as they tried to correct for the blurred focus. Much of the dialogue between shock scenes was muted or whispered, so as to regain audience involvement.

When humans are led toward hypnosis, they become highly suggestible. Their emotions become more easily manipulated, managed, and controlled the further they proceed along the induction path.

Friedkin utilized little music in the sound track, though he credited works by Hans Werner Henzle, George Crumb, Anton Webern, and five other composers. Like all good background music, the themes were purposely designed for subliminal consumption. The consumption of music and sound generally followed two patterns. One pattern built slowly from plateau to plateau, always intensifying the audience's emotional response. Indeed, in a sample of roughly fifty women who had seen the movie, over half candidly admitted *The Exorcist* excited them sexually. Most cited the sound track as the apparent source of this excitement.

## MEDIA. SEXPLORATION

The other general sound pattern abruptly jarred the audience into a tension state. Loud, sharp noises—bells ringing, doors slamming, dogs barking—preceded and followed by extended periods of electronic silence. The sound would gradually increase to a crescendo, then abruptly trail off to nothingness, or cut off sharply. This technique is primarily an attention-holding-tension-building device. Physiological tension was also increased by silences. For example, the early scene in the attic—which was abruptly broken by a loud, sharp noise.

Jumping the sound from one scene to the next—as a continuity and tension-building device, quite similar to the pink roses used visually—was done throughout the film. An important sound jump occurred during Father Karras's first visit to the house. During the preceding scene, in the dream sequence where Karras's mother climbs the subway stairs, the street sound was unrecognizable as a rather high frequency, moderately loud-volume sound. In the next scene where Karras visited the house, the sound was the same except a truck gear shift was heard and the sound increased in frequency. The gear shift identified the background noise, reducing audience tension for the priest's first visit with Regan, where the tension again built toward a tense climax.

### Loud Silences

The Exorcist silences were not completely silent. They were electronic silences, with low-frequency background hums. The silences were only silent in contrast to high and increasing volume sequences. These silences also formed a series of plateaus which gradually increased in volume and decreased in time interval as the story moved toward various climactic situations. Silences, like the sounds, were used to produce within the audience a series of emotional plateaus. These silences became louder and louder and more and more rapid as each segment progressed. The tension and release, tension and release, tension and release, always building higher and higher and higher, induced—by itself—exhaustion and even nausea for many in the audience.

Another manifestation of tension management in the audience was coughing. The audience coughed heavily at predict-

## The Exorcist Massage Parlor

able intervals throughout the movie. Audience coughing was recorded at several theaters and always appeared at roughly the same points in the story. This was compared with cough reactions in several other action-type films, *The Sting*, *Executive Decision*, and *Papillon*. *The Exorcist*, in comparison, produced notably stronger and more predictable cough patterns. There were, apparently, subliminal cues in the visual or auditory stimuli that motivated the coughing.

Coughing is a tension release and appeared to occur roughly within thirty seconds after the auditory tension peaks were released. The first sounds of the evil force in the attic sounded like coughing, followed by a rasping bronchial sound. Coughing, of course, can lead to an upset stomach.

The changes of Regan's voice—from that of a twelve-year-old girl to that of the devil—were carefully synthesized with the visual changes in her appearance. At some point during this transition, the girl's voice was replaced by the voice of Mercedes McCambridge, an actress with a deep husky voice. Friedkin admitted to putting the actress's voice through a filter to produce a voice unidentifiable as either male or female.

In other words, the devil's voice was consciously perceived as androgenous, or hermaphroditic. This voice quality would not be meaningful at the conscious level, but would be subliminally apparent. No matter how natural voices are disguised, hypnotized humans are able to identify male or female voice characteristics. It would not be an exaggeration to state that *The Exorcist* visual effects were only props for the sound. A large proportion of the audience recalled the sound with great discomfort weeks after leaving the theater.

## Stranger Than Fiction

These pages have included only a handful of the behavioral engineering techniques utilized in *The Exorcist*. Many of the techniques described in this chapter go far beyond merely playing yo-yo with an audience's emotions, during an afternoon or evening's entertainment. They endure far beyond the commercial lifetime of a single movie. What was done to *The Exorcist* audience could endure in some memory systems throughout a lifetime.

On December 8, 1972, a two-paragraph note appeared in The New York Times business section, announcing that In-Flight Motion Pictures, Inc. would initiate the sale of subliminal advertising commercials embedded in the film they distribute. In-Flight is a monopoly corporation that distributes movies to every major airline operating in and out of North America.

Considering the exponential growth patterns of Western behavioral science and technology, we can reasonably assume this is still only the beginning. As a society, we prefer to think of 1984, Brave New World, A Clockwork Orange, and Soylent Green as science fiction and fantasy. But as *The Exorcist* abundantly demonstrated, modern media-induced truths and realities may have already become far stranger than any fiction ever written.

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# Subliminal Rock

To ignore your environment  
is to eventually find yourself  
a slave to it.

WYNDHAM LEWIS  
The Art of Being Ruled

## A Subliminal Hook

This chapter probes those subliminal techniques engineered into popular records that almost anyone can find. The subliminal messages are hidden in relatively simple verbal or musical illusions. Subliminal technology sells records by the tens of millions each year in North America. No one apparently knows or understands as yet, however, the consequences of this sensory bombardment upon human value systems.

Buried within the April 1974 list of top-thirty record sellers was a song called "Hooked on a Feeling" recorded by a rock group billed as Blue Swede. Like so many hundreds of other such rock ballads, relentlessly merchandised each year across North America, "Hooked" was a passed-over item a few months later. But during its brief glory peak, the record sold several million copies, producing a small fortune for its promoters. Most of the singles were purchased by gum-chewing, long-haired teen-age girls who first heard it being plugged by disc jockeys on the AM baud wasteland.

Not one of the rock biggies, "Hooked" did well. Though few fans could consciously decipher the banality in the song's lyrics, the melody was whistled and hummed by both teen-

agers and even by some of their parents who picked it up unconsciously.

"Hooked on a Feeling" has a curious chant, sung by the chorus, which is sustained behind the lyric. The repetitious background phrase sounds like "ooh-ga-shook-ah." Considering the lyric and chant hi a figure-ground relationship, the audience consciously listened to the lyric's meaningless banality, not the background chant. Roughly a hundred teen-agers who owned the record, both male and female, were asked what the background phrase "ooh-ga-shook-ah" meant. No one had any idea. They also had no conscious idea what the lyric was about, even though all had heard the song dozens—if not many, many dozens—of times.

At several points in the continuity of the background chant—consciously ignored because attention was focused upon the foreground lyric—the chanted phrase "Ooh-ga-shook-ah" smoothly and very distinctly converted into "Who got sucked off?" The technique has been called metacontrast or backward masking, much like the magician who tricks you into watching his right hand while he picks your pocket with his left.

Several weeks later, many in the group interviewed stated all they could hear now in the song was this embedded obscenity. Most appeared disgusted and disillusioned with both the record and the recording artists. Several pointed out, "We've been had!"

North America is a visually oriented culture. Americans are more consciously concerned with visual form, experience, color, movement or the lack of movement, depth illusions, and other visual experiences than are many other cultures, Russians, for example, appear strongly biased toward auditory experience, putting far more trust in what they hear than in what they see. Because Americans tend to consciously ignore or consider auditory experience insignificant, there appears little indication that we are aware of either music's power or its pervasiveness.

Two thousand years ago, Plato demanded strict censorship over popular music in his Utopian Republic. He feared citizens "would be tempted and corrupted by weak and voluptuous airs and led to indulge in demoralizing emotions." Fears of music's power to corrupt have been expressed by many

philosophers and scientists. In modern America, even with all the media criticism published, very little mention has been made of the behavioral effects of music or lyrics. Popular music, in all its happiness and horror, is an invisible dimension of today's environment

### Divide the Market and Conquer

Popular music is skillfully marketed to specific groups and subgroups within the society with an intensity that would make an underarm deodorant salesman blush with envy. A record may be produced and marketed for several young markets, but producers usually aim at specific targets: the preteen, eight to twelve; early teen, thirteen to fourteen; midteen, fifteen to sixteen; late teen, seventeen to nineteen; and postteen, over twenty. Rarely will a single recording artist or group hit across the board, selling to all the markets. The Beatles were, in their later years, one of the few groups who appeared to cross virtually all demographic groups. As some successful music groups aged, however, their audiences sustained their enthusiasm as they, too, grew older. This is rare. Most of the groups hit hard, saturate their markets, and disappear.

The teen-age rock market has been studied for years by commercial researchers, much like any marketing target: purchasing patterns, life-styles, psychosexual development, mating customs, aggressions, costuming, drive systems, paternal-maternal relationships, the whole range of complex needs within individuals and the groups to which they belong.

These music consumers are highly discriminating in what they purchase, and usually buy strictly within their market segments. The soul sounds of James Brown will not likely reach the same market segment supporting Bobby Sherman. Rock music, for example, breaks down into "rock 'n' roll," "jazz rock," "bubble gum," "commercial rock," "acid (or psychedelic) rock," "heavy rock," etcetera ad infinitum. The category list constantly changes, divides, and subdivides.

Teen-agers generally listen to top-forty music stations an average of six hours daily. They purchase an average of four new records weekly. They buy 60 percent of all 45-rpm singles, while the under-twenty-five age group buys 80 per-

cent. The music merchandising business is aimed at the young, especially those in the upper-middle income group with high discretionary incomes supplied by indulgent parents.

Marketing technicians have been extraordinarily successful in managing teen-age music markets. More millionaires are believed to have emerged from the popular music industry during the past two decades than in any other segment of the American economy.

### Paul's Early Death

One very profitable use of subliminal manipulation technique involved the Beatles' multimillion-dollar publicity stunt over the supposed death of Paul McCartney. For never-explained reasons, McCartney avoided public appearances over an extended period. Rumors swept the world, "Paul is dead!" Headlines questioning the fate of Paul appeared in every major world capital.

Had they really wished to resolve the question, the rumor could quickly have been turned off by simply permitting a wire service to interview the musician. This, of course, was never done. When you can make more money by staying home than appearing in public, you stay home. The Beatles milked the rumor for all it was worth—and it was worth millions. They embedded material on Paul's death in their recordings. One of these was in the *Magical Mystery Tour* album in the last few grooves of a song titled "Strawberry Fields." A voice inexplicably appeared at low volume and said, "I buried Paul." In the hysteria of the time, similar sound embedding appeared in many other recordings. These embeds would not be consciously perceived, but would subliminally—because of their strong emotional impact—reinforce the album's value and emotional significance far more powerfully than could a million dollars' worth of network television commercials.

The death rumor was also reinforced on the covers of albums such as *Sergeant Pepper*, where on the cover the four Beatles were pictured with Paul McCartney's back turned to the reader. The *Abbey Road* album cover even showed Paul in a burial costume. The cover layout on an album titled The  
120

## Subliminal Rock

Beatles in the Beginning also included a four-candled candelabrum with one of the candle's flame extinguished.

The success of these strategies is attested to by virtually any parent who has witnessed the glassy-eyed hypnotic stupor in which they find their youngsters absorbing highly amplified stroking via the latest hit record. The highly visible effects of these promotions are a compulsive purchasing of singles and albums and endless hours of repetitive listening.

### Music as Sex Substitute

Very strong subliminal sexual stimulation is at least part of what is being massaged into the young psyches. In one survey of about fifty male high school students, almost a third openly admitted masturbating while listening to rock music. Most young Americans are highly secretive about their sexual behavior. This implies that the actual percentage of those who obtain vicarious sexual stimulation from, auditory stimuli is much higher.

Most clearly, neither record addicts nor their parents who support the addiction have any conscious idea of what they are so deeply involved with. In a survey of over four hundred students in metropolitan Detroit and Grand Rapids, Michigan, psychologists John Robinson and Paul Hirsch found that only about 20 percent of these teen-agers—from the eighth and eleventh grades and varied in social class, race, and religion—could reasonably explain the meaning of lyrics from such super-hits as "Ode to Billy Joe," "Incense and Pepper-mit," "Heavy Music," and "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds." A third to one half of these students had no conscious idea whatsoever as to the meaning of these lyrics. And the rest had only vague or partial explanations of the various songs' verbal meanings.

The teen-agers surveyed uniformly tried to avoid any discussion of meaning, many maintaining there was no real meaning—"just a good sound!" Seventy percent emphasized they liked a record more for its beat or sound than for its message. None appeared certain just what "beat" or "sound" meant, nor could they even specify what they meant by "message."

In the above Michigan study, as well as many others, what

appeared was a consumer repression from consciousness of lyric meaning. If the mind-massagers who produce the music were as vague and uncertain about what was going on in their markets as are the consumers, widespread bankruptcy would be in store for every major record producer in America. Consider the king's ransom these companies have had to pay writers such as Paul Simon. Yet few of their fans appear to either understand or consider significant what these writers produce. This is, to put it mildly, a strange paradox—unless the song's lack of conscious meaning becomes highly meaningful at the unconscious level, and song lyrics, like poetry and other art forms, are purposely produced for unconscious perception.

### Tommy's Invisible Sell

The Who's *Tommy*, a so-called rock opera, was released during 1975 as a feature motion picture, starring Ann-Margret, Oliver Reed, Roger Daltrey, and Elton John. Based upon a record album first distributed in 1969, the movie provided all audiences with a visual bath in sensation.

Every visual trick in the book was thrown into the film by director Ken Russell—sacrilegious spectacles such as a rock communion procession escorting a fifteen-foot plaster statue of Marilyn Monroe with her skirt blown high and a communion offering to the faithful of booze and amphetamine (speed) capsules rather than the more traditionally symbolic wafers and wine. In one powerful scene *Tommy*'s sensual mother (played by Ann-Margret) hurled a champagne bottle into a TV picture tube where soap and bean commercials were appearing. A flood of soapsuds shot into the room from the damaged tube, followed by a torrential outpouring of beans, and finally a surging river of excrement in which the actress erotically rolls and bathes.

The film, however, had very little to do with the record album. Marshall McLuhan's notion of "hot and cool media" well illustrates the point "Cool is involving, hot is not." The film version was "hot." Audiences could consciously perceive virtually everything the director and actors tried to express. The involvement was, for the most part, conscious.

The Who's original album of *Tommy* was another story.

## Subliminal Rock

Mostly designed for subliminal interpretation and involvement, the album was, in McLuhan's terms, "cool," deeply involving subconscious levels. The album, of course, initially programmed the audience for the film at least five years in advance. The album of *Tommy* sold roughly 2 million copies during the first year of its distribution.

An event like *Tommy* is usually dismissed as meaningless by adults, especially parents who usually finance the album's purchase. If they were consciously aware of the event at all, it was only in terms of a background-noise distraction in their living rooms.

In late 1969, a group of fifty adults in a university adult education class, many of them parents of teen-agers, were requested to write out briefly what they believed was meant by the story of *Tommy*. The record was played for them in its entirety. After hearing the record, the group sat with universally bewildered expressions. Some liked it, some disliked it, but most were uncertain how they felt. No individual in the group was able to even vaguely answer simple questions such as, "What is *Tommy* all about?" "What does the story mean?"

*Tommy* was played for the group a second time with the lyrics displayed on a projection screen so the group could read what they were hearing. But end results were identical—no one was able to specify anything about the story. However, feelings toward the album appeared to intensify after the second playing. More people strongly liked or disliked the album, and fewer were uncertain about their feelings. Nevertheless, even then no one in the group could describe what was going on.

Analysis of the lyrics was now undertaken by the group on a line-to-line basis, much as one might attempt to analyze an Elizabethan sonnet. Meanings for each phrase, line, and stanza were accepted only if a majority of the group agreed the meaning was a valid possibility. When the group disagreed significantly, alternative explanations were included as possibly valid.

The results of this experiment were, to put it mildly, shocking—especially as the primary market appeared to be teenage boys and girls in the thirteen to nineteen age group. The

following is a synopsis of what the group felt Tommy was all about:

### A Romantic Fantasy

Tommy's mother was a prostitute whose husband died in World War I. After Tommy was born, she continued with her clients and eventually married a man who became her pimp. As an infant, Tommy had witnessed the sexual relationships between his mother and her lovers. He was told repeatedly by his mother and father to wipe these "absurd" memories from his mind. "To know the truth" by forgetting what had happened. The Oedipal implications of a young man and his step-father were, of course, basic to Shakespeare's play Hamlet. Now, complicate the situation by making the step-father a pimp. Tommy became autistic—blind, deaf, and dumb, unresponsive and unaware of everything. He "sits silently, picks his nose and smiles, and pokes his tongue at everything."

Cousin Kevin taught Tommy about life. Kevin described himself as "the school bully, the classroom cheat, the nastiest playfriend you could ever meet." He put glass in Tommy's food, spikes in his seat, pins in his fingers, treads on his feet, tied him in a chair, called him a freak, held his head under water and laughed, shut him outside in the rain to catch cold and die, burned his arm with a cigarette, dragged him around by the hair, and pushed him down the stairs.

Uncle Ernie baby-sat with Tommy. A homosexual, he became drunk and sexually assaulted the autistic child. Autistic Tommy was, then, left by his mother with the Acid Queen—a friend of the family—who introduced him to both drugs and sex. "Watch his body writhe," she screamed excitedly.

Tommy, described as a deaf, dumb, and blind freak, eventually developed great skill with pinball machines. He "becomes part of the machine." A wizard at the game, he was not distracted by buzzers, balls, and flashing lights. He played by "sense of smell."

Tommy was finally taken to a doctor who discovered he could see, speak, and hear, but had become a machine that did not feel. The doctor's prescription was, "Go to the mirror, boy!" The mirror was the mirror of Narcissus which reflected only idealized illusions. When Tommy attempted to

probe beneath his superficial image, his mother attacked him for peering into his inner self. In desperation, she smashed the mirror. His cure was miraculous.

From that moment, Tommy became a popular sensation. He left a devastating trail of people hypnotized by his messianic power. Everyone marveled at Tommy's seemingly supernatural ability to make his own images, to define his own illusions and realities, and to make his inner hidden reality match in appearance the exposed outer illusion.

Tommy became a gospel singer and preacher surrounded by disc jockeys, guards, and his loyal fans. A girl, Sally, was infatuated with Tommy and tried to touch him during one of his sermons. She was thrown from the stage by guards and her face was cut, requiring sixteen stitches. She, in the end, married a rock musician. Tommy was finally free—a messiah followed by many disciples. He founded Tommy's Holiday Camp, run by Uncle Ernie, where "the holiday is forever."

But this manipulation of society's illusions made everyone turn against Tommy in the end. "We forsake you," the crowd yelled. "Let's forget you—better still." Tommy's fate seemed typical of that in store for anyone who steps through the broken mirror of mass illusion to probe the inner world—from Socrates through Freud to McLuhan.

### The Repression Mechanism

The complete line-by-line analysis of Tommy required several hours' work by the group. As the meanings developed, several women, who in the earlier test of their feelings had indicated strong aversion to the recording, became nauseous. Many reported agitation, anger, a sense of outrage and frustration. One mother reported she had refused to permit her thirteen-year-old daughter to purchase the album. At the time, she had not been certain as to why she felt so strongly against Tommy. The woman described her daughter's reaction to the denial as "near hysteria." When the idea of a drug-deprived addictive response was suggested, the mother reluctantly agreed to the similarity. This mother could not believe her daughter consciously understood what the album was all about—even though the young girl had heard it several times all the way through.

Since the album *Tommy* was much discussed among teenagers at the time, interviews with roughly fifty were undertaken by college students several months after the record appeared in stores. Less than 2 percent of the teenagers were able to give a coherent, even partial explanation of the lyrics' meaning. Yet 20 percent owned the record, another 40 percent planned to buy it, and 98 percent had heard the album at least once. All the teen-agers interviewed reported *Tommy* was one of the most significant album productions of the year.

Two years later, another survey of a hundred teen-agers was again made. Teen-agers were asked to explain what *Tommy* was all about. Roughly 25 percent of those who had heard the record gave a reasonably detailed account of *Tommy's* tragic and bizarre life. Their interpretations were remarkably close to the one developed a year earlier by the adult group. It appeared that when these teen-agers first purchased or heard the album, they were consciously uncertain as to what the story involved. The learning process, apparently, took several months. Once they were more or less consciously aware of what was going on in *Tommy*, they generally lost interest in the album.

All the students interviewed agreed they would never, under any circumstances, discuss what they knew of *Tommy's* adventures with their parents or any other adult. These young people identified with *Tommy* quite strongly—an autistic, ravaged child forced not to feel, hear, see, or speak the truth. Parents might well give these identification structures some careful thought.

What appeared to be occurring in *Tommy*, and in many similar rock music albums and singles, was planned ambiguity. Lyrics, orchestration, recording effects, the whole production—most of which required hundreds of hours of skilled labor—was designed to communicate meaningfully only at symbolic subliminal levels.

Teen-agers seem to "buy" the feelings produced by subliminal stimuli without any conscious awareness of specific meanings. A few eventually do discover what is going on, but the cognitive process appears to take weeks, even months, as the message slowly rises to consciousness. At the point where the market, or a substantial portion of it, can consciously

## Subliminal Rock

deal with the message, the record is commercially dead. But there are always new singles and albums being born to replace the fallen. As many as five hundred new recordings a week hit the promotion fan.

### Who Tells the Story?

The question of who is saying what to whom in rock music is one of the most intriguing aspects of lyric symbology. Ostensibly, boy vocalists dominate the industry and often appear to be singing to girls—possibly the ones who might reasonably be the marketing targets. But this would seem to leave the boy audience out in the cold. In fact, both girls and boys identify with the vocalist, however, suggesting something far more complex and devious is involved.

The boy singer does not aim his lyrics directly at the gum-chewing, vacant-eyed teeny-boppers. This would invite disaster at the record shops. The singers and their lyric writers often project their sentimentality at the singer's mother—a symbolic subliminal identification. The girl record buyers can then unconsciously identify with their hero's mother, whom their hero worships and loves. The boy record buyers support the records as they unconsciously perceive the singer suffering the same maternal rejections they believe themselves to have suffered. They have no reason, therefore, for jealousy or envy when girl friends boost the record.

The technique appears often on million-seller recordings, Elvis Presley's 1957 hit pleads with a subliminal mother to "Let Me Be Your Teddy Bear."\*

... Put a chain around my neck  
And lead me anywhere,  
Oh let me be your teddy bear.

Baby let me be around you any night,  
Run your fingers through my hair,  
And cuddle me real tight.  
Oh let me be your teddy bear,

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127

## MEDIA SEXPLOITATION

This hardly describes a popular teen-age mating ritual.. Even in America's maternally dominated society, few boys would submit to such a relationship with a girl friend. Humans often describe loved ones in verbalisms they project upon themselves—idealized realities, wishes, or fantasy fulfillments. Presley's "baby," then, became an unconscious synonym for mother while the highest paid star in the history of motion pictures assumed the role of a small infant.

The designation "baby," as used in popular music, is often a direct maternal reference. The euphemism for mother, sung by a quivering, immature male voice—pleading an unresolved Oedipal conflict intimately familiar to millions of young Americans—is frequently at the bottom of a song's financial success. These are the plaintive puberty pleadings of a maternally starved generation. The girl consumer identifies with the singer's love object—his mother. The boy consumer identifies with the singer and his sufferings. The formula is well proven and successful. Dad, of course, is totally ignored in this matriarchal game.

Bobby Curtola, another rock superstar, sang his way into early retirement by skillfully manipulating young America's Oedipal conflicts. "Call Me Baby" was one of his early best-selling records.

Call me baby, honey baby  
Put your loving arms about me honey baby  
Say it tender when we meet  
Say it soft and say it sweet  
Call me baby, baby, honey baby.

Is it conceivable a young man would want his sweetheart, girl friend, or lover, to call him "baby" and deal with him as though he were an infant child? Hardly! The song is aimed at Mommy, providing subliminal identification for the market.

### Mommy's Many Pseudonyms

Paul Anka's first recording, "Diana," sold in excess of 8 1/2 million copies—the third largest-selling single record of all time. A national publicity campaign was launched over the enigma of Diana's identity. Several girl vocalists and actresses of the

early 1960s were considered as fantasy possibilities in publicity releases. Like most publicity department fantasies, however, these were simply nonsense—designed only to milk that high discretionary income from the pockets of teen-ager's parents.

Paul Anka, serving the Oedipal conflicts of North American teen-agers, serenaded his symbolic mother:

I'm so young and you're so old  
This my darling I've been told  
I don't care just what they say  
'Cause forever I will pray  
You and I will be as free  
As the birds up in the trees  
Oh please stay by me, Diana\*

A handful of the hundreds of lyrics which utilize maternal identifications include Elvis Presley's "(You're So Square) Baby I Don't Care," Joe South & the Believers' "Walk a Mile in My Shoes," Bobby Vee's "Rubber Ball" and "Sharing You," and Frankie Avalon's "Welcome Home." Only once in a while does Mother get into a song at the conscious level as in Jo-Anne Campbell's "Mother, Please!" and Roy Orbison's "Mama."

Father, as a symbol of dominance, authority, respect, and love, plays a limited role in mainstream popular American music. When he appears it is most frequently in the country and western field. One recording superstar, Jimmy Dean, made a fortune out of an idealized father projection in his "Big Bad John," followed by "Little Bitty Big John," and finally "P. T. 109," which dealt with John F. Kennedy's wartime experience. When the trilogy was completed, Jimmy Dean could have retired for three lifetimes to the French Riviera. All of which seems to prove that there is money to be made out of paternal, as well as maternal fantasies in the American dream.

\* "Diana" words and music by Paul Anka © copyright 1957 by Pamco Music, Inc. © copyright assigned 1963 to Spanka Music Corp., 445 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y., for USA & Canada only. Used by permission, all rights reserved.

For many years, American culture has been discussed as a matriarchy. Women—both real and symbolic mothers—have long dominated the society, especially the children. Long-haired teen-age boys are precisely what mothers would have endorsed thirty years ago if their husbands had permitted them to get away with it. Long hair on male children used to be cut when the boy finished the Oedipal stage, rarely later than the fifth year.

### Beatles Followed Bobbies

No discussion of popular music in America would be complete without mentioning the Beatles. The Beatles emerged from an evolution of musicians and composers that between 1956 and 1958, culminated in Elvis Presley. During a military service eclipse in Presley's career, a small army of Bobbies were hatched by the industry—Bobby Curtola, Bobby Vee, Bobby Darin, Bobby Rydell, Bobby Freeman, ad infinitum. The Bobby phenomenon died slowly during the early 1960s, when a brief, though intense, dance-fad period developed with Chubby Checker's "Twist." Dee Dee Sharp, Bobby Rydell, Little Eva, The Orlons, and the Dovells promoted dance songs such as "The Fly," "The Pony," "The Hully Gully," "The Mashed Potato," "The Locomotion," "The Bristol Stomp," "The Hitchhiker," "The Limbo Rock" and "The Wah-Watusi."

These dance fads came into vogue after large investments and heavy promotion expenses, but few stayed alive long enough to yield either high or sustaining profits. Market segmentation and segment isolation began to evolve as a more dependable music merchandising strategy.

Teeny-boppers are young teens, thirteen to fourteen and preteens, eleven to twelve. Their music is called bubblegum, designed for fans still young or innocent enough to chew gum rather than smoke tobacco or pot. Toward the end of 1963, no bubblegum music appeared on national U.S. hit surveys. The market was wide open.

Already a phenomenal success in England, the Beatles' skilled marketing technicians invaded America. By January 1964, songs such as "I Saw Her Standing There," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "From Me to You," "She Loves You,"

## Subliminal Rock

"Please Mr. Postman," "All My Lovin'," and "Hold Me Tight" appeared in the top ten. During February, Ed Sullivan captured 94 percent of the Class A time Sunday night television audience when he featured the Beatles for only fifteen minutes on his national variety show.

The craze was on. Teeny-boppers drove their parents into distraction over the purchase of Beatles dolls, records, T-shirts, etc. The Beatles sold everything that could be attached to their name and image.

It is impossible to determine how much of the Beatles fad was actually created (in the sense of adding something new) and how much was merely a reflection of psychosocial dynamics already operating in Western society. Very likely, the Beatles both innovated as well as attached themselves to the undercurrents of the past.

Though the four Beatles were the only visible portion of the empire, there were several hundred skilled—though invisible -- technicians behind the scenes who created and manipulated the illusions. No one will likely ever know for certain which portions of what the public perceived as the Beatles was actually produced by the four young men or their staff. For example, the Beatles often recorded separately, and their four (or more) recordings were mixed electronically for the final album. The technique gave their engineers complete control over what finally appeared.

## Plaintive Puberty Pleadings

An entire book could be devoted to a study of the lyrics written for the early Beatles music. It would probably make dull reading, however, as the puberty agonies portrayed become highly repetitious. These songs did, nevertheless, tell the teeny-boppers what they most wanted to hear. And many parents probably felt a sense of relief when their kids dropped the ass-bumping sexuality of pre-Beatles groups. Once established, the Beatles became one of the few groups engineered to transcend market segmentation and achieve almost universal appeal. According to Beatles biographer Hunter Davies, every Beatles album, even before 1968, sold in excess of one million copies. The retail price became higher and higher as they milked the market for all it was

## MEDIA SEXPLOITATION

worth. One multimillion-seller album, *Abbey Road*, sold for ten dollars. A publicity release from the Beatles' management had the temerity to state that fans should be grateful they could obtain the record even at that price.

In 1968 the industry's most successful album was released by Capitol Records—*Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. As a monument to electronic gimmickry, *Sergeant Pepper* was a work of art. The album—by the producer's own admission—required over four hundred hours to record. Perhaps strangely, the album reflected despair, hopelessness, and the futility and hypocrisy of modern life's illusions. To the uninitiated parent, however, the record appeared gay, light, and even humorous. Minor portions were perceived by the teen-age audience consciously, but the largest portion was heard only at subliminal levels.

Side One concerned illusion and means by which people hide truth from themselves. The side began with the business of show business, the greatest illusion of them all. Drugs were dealt with in the songs "Fixing a Hole" and "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"—a not so hidden reference to LSD.

Lush verbal imagery and musical phrase distortions conveyed the hallucinations from an acid trip:

"With tangerine trees and marmalade skies . . ."

Refusals by parents to face the truth or deal with realities were caustically dealt with in "Getting Better," the parental illusion of their idealized relationship with their children in "She's Leaving Home," which pictured parents after their daughter had run away from home:

We gave her most of our lives . . .

We gave her everything money can buy...

The song's narrator sings in counterpoint to the lyrics:

She's leaving home after living alone  
For so many years\*

\* "She's Leaving Home" by Lennon/McCartney © 1967 Northern Songs, Ltd.

## Subliminal Rock

Side One concluded with a return from disturbed family relationships to the illusions of show business. Side Two opened with a song by George Harrison, "Within You Without You," which summarized the meaning of Side One.

The space between us all, and the people who Hide themselves behind a wall of illusion.\*

The next three compositions considered life without drugs or hypocrisy—the sterile, ritualized roles people play. The first "When I'm Sixty-four," ridiculed the life of an elderly couple; the second, "Lovely Rita," made fun of romantic love, extolling the tribulations of a Liverpool whore who procured through her respectable job as a meter maid. The third, deceptively titled, "Good Morning, Good Morning," desolately described the futility and banality of life. The reprise of Sergeant Pepper's theme changed dramatically. Sergeant Pepper was no longer the outrageously funny character who promised smiles and entertainment. Repeating the line four times, the Beatles sang "Sergeant Pepper's lonely." In summary, the final song, "A Day in the Life," questioned whether man could live without his illusions.

## A Literature for the Young

Heady stuff for teen-agers? Jon Eisen in *The Age of Rock* compared Sergeant Pepper with T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland* in its near desperate reflections upon contemporary life. Dealing—for most of the fans—at subliminal levels, the Beatles became spokesmen for their generation who resisted the status quo. Their record company simply attached their resistance, quite normal resistance among the young at least since the times of Socrates, to the mass merchandising of music. The Beatles even, at one point, exposed themselves as illusions or put-ons created by their early manager Brian Epstein. They declared publicly that from Sergeant Pepper onward, they planned to be themselves both off stage and on. Their fans believed

\* "Within You Without You" by George Harrison © 1967 Northern Songs, Ltd.

them, to the tune of tens of millions of dollars in record purchases.

At the subliminal level, Sergeant Pepper was heavily integrated with sex, drugs, and revolutionary politics. It is difficult to determine where the line or threshold lies between conscious and subliminal perception for any stimuli as complex as Sergeant Pepper. One thing is certain, however. Parents never got the message, though most of them strongly rejected Sergeant Pepper without consciously realizing why. Of course, this parental rejection played right into the marketing technique, virtually assuring the record's success.

### "Jude" Hits Jackpot

One of the most popular recordings of 1968 was the Beatles single "Hey Jude"\*\* and "Revolution." "Revolution" deals with politics and was sung by John Lennon—the symbolic father of the Beatles' archetypal family. Paul McCartney, who consistently portrayed a maternal role in the family, sang "Hey Jude," providing spiritual advice in the form of drugs as an escape route for pain.

Two meanings for "Jude" appeared as likely symbology in the song. "Jude" could have referred to Judas who betrayed Christ under the guise of friendship. Heroin, of course, at first seems to be a friend before it betrays the user into addiction. The second possibility involved the Apostle Jude who warned against those who call themselves Christians while living hypocritically in a morally loose society.

The haunting voice of McCartney sang, "Let her into your heart," "Her" meaning the drug and "heart" the pump that circulates drug-laden blood through the body—so "you can start to make it better."

During the lonely opening verse, the drug injection occurred. In the second verse, musicians joined to make the sound (life) more full and complete. The lyrics tell us, "Don't be afraid." "The moment you let her under your skin, you begin to make it better."

\*\*"Hey Jude" by Lennon/McCartney © 1967 Northern Songs, Ltd.

The third verse said, ". . . anytime you feel the pain, Hey Jude-refrain."

"Refrain" means, in one sense, leave it alone. But, the inverse symbology means repeat the chorus or repeat the injection at the end of each good period when the pain returns. The verse explained that only a fool pretends there is nothing wrong with empty feelings and avoids being helped by the heroin. The reference to "cool" and \*'a little colder" is curious. A common symptom of the deprived addict is being continuously cold. The message here is why be cold when "she" or "her" is available.

The narrator, or drug pusher, repeats his plea in the fourth verse, asking "don't let me down." All you need do is "go and get her" and "let her into your heart."

The fifth verse advised, "Let it out and let it in." Let out inhibited emotions and feelings, let the drag or syringe into your body. "You're waiting for someone to perform [synonym for trip] with." "Don't you know it's just you." You are all that is necessary. "The movement you need is on your shoulder," suggesting either the arm used for the injection or the monkey on your back or shoulder. The final verse counseled, "don't take it bad"—a bad trip should be avoided. "Make it better," by releasing inhibitions and fears. Toward the end of the song, a scream is heard for "Mamma!"—a cry for help, a plea for rescue from the drug addiction.

As the song progressed, a screaming, maniacal chant is heard in the background—providing a contrapuntal theme to the lyric. The chorus chanted, "you gotta break it"—an apparent reference to the habit—"you know you can make it," "don't go back," or in other words, Stay clean! Jude's future at the conclusion is uncertain. The audience never found out whether Jude had kicked the habit or gone on to another fix. The probability that the addiction continued, however, appeared far more likely. "Hey Jude" could, to put it conservatively, reinforce a tendency toward addiction, making it appear a logical solution to a young person's normal conflicts with authority, society, and the maturation process.

## Immortality May Be Forever

Any hope the Beatles would eventually run their course and disappear into limbo is purely wishful thinking. Their pervasive influence upon young people all over the world persists.

In 1973 two anthologies were released: Beatles 1962-1966 and Beatles 1967-1970. Both albums were million sellers within three weeks. A year later, both albums were still among the top hundred in Current LP Sales, according to Billboard. George Harrison's *Living in the Material World* and Paul McCartney's *Red Rose Speedway* were also released in 1973 and were instantly successful.

In interviews with young record purchasers in 1974, many admitted that in spite of the high cost of new Beatles records, they purchased them usually without hearing the music. None could explain why. Their behavior resembled that of either robots or Pavlov's dogs responding to bell stimuli.

Keeping the Beatles myth alive with manufactured rumors or pseudo-news about an eternally promised Beatles reunion, the news media helped perpetuate the mythological image. For example, a well-engineered publicity release in *Newsweek* of March 26, 1973, commented upon the new record releases of the folk heroes of the American dream-marketing industry:

It was, as producer Richard Perry noted, the first time the three have played together since the Beatles. But any future reunion is pure conjecture. An awful lot of impure conjecturing was going on including the possibility, encouraged by business manager Allen Klein, that the three Beatles would remain in L.A. to record a real John, George, and Ringo album.

The above logic is much like the old question "Will she or won't she?" As long as no one is certain, she will be courted, pursued, indulged, and kept alive in our fantasies.

No one today questions the Beatles' impact upon Western society. They were successful in many languages, even reaching into the collective unconscious of such tradition-oriented cultures as the Russian and Japanese. The mythology follows each of the four young multimillionaires as they grow

older and journey from wife to wife and from one misadventure to another. They are viewed as the initiators of an important epoch of history, the founders of popular culture, and the beginning of an entire army of popular music heroes who exploited their tradition.

However, when anyone asks direct questions as to the Beatles' contribution to Western society, the answers are always vague, unspecific, and usually involve some aspect of the mystique. During several hundred interviews with both children and adults, no one appeared to have any exact idea about the specific differences in their lives that might be directly attributed to the Beatles. Every answer given by these respondents could have been said of other musical groups going back into the 1920s, 30s, or 40s.

### A Value System Changed

The answer was amazingly simple and so shocking that no one had apparently put it together. The Beatles popularized and culturally legitimatized hallucinatory drug usage among teen-agers throughout the world.

Hallucinatory and addictive drugs had never before been a part of any society's main cultural value system. Even in places like Indochina, where the French legalized opium as a technique of population management and control, drugs were confined to a minority of users—usually the economically or politically disenfranchised. Certainly, drug usage had never before in the world's history been advertised heavily—as a record promotion technique—by popular music directed at adolescents.

An examination of best-selling music lyrics during the five years preceding the Beatles failed to turn up many song lyrics that could even remotely be interpreted as drug ballads. Pre-Beatles lyrics were crammed with overt and covert sexual symbolism. Death was not an infrequent symbolic entity celebrated subliminally in popular song. But drugs were simply not being pushed, even though drug usage was, as it had always been, apparent among American society's disenfranchised fringes. The Beatles became the super drug culture prophets and pushers of all time. Drugs, of course, ultimately

involve self destruction, and death, or withdrawal from reality.

Western society, especially England and North America had been well primed for expanded drug usage through years of conditioning by pharmaceutical, alcohol, and tobacco advertising. Media long ago established a culturally accepted legitimacy for the use of chemical solutions for problems of emotional adjustment. For the music industry to expand one step beyond household psychogenic products to hallucinatory drug utilization by teen-agers was so simple that even a child should have been able to figure it out. Children did figure it out, of course. No one outside the industry got wise to what was going on, nor did they even suspect how the marketing plan worked.

### The Bridge to Happiness

According to Billboard, "Bridge over Troubled Water" sold over 5 million copies during 1969 as a single recording. The album sold over 4 million copies—the second highest seller during a single year in the history of record sales. (The Beatles' Sergeant Pepper was the first.) "Bridge," however, as single and album, received a total of five of the recording industry's Oscar equivalents—the Grammy Awards—in 1969.

Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel won best-selling single best-selling album, best-engineered single, best-engineered album, and best composer.

Paul Simon, the composer, claimed he took a month to write "Bridge" and another month to record the composition. The rather simple, unassuming final recording lasted four minutes and fifty-two seconds—rather long for the average single. For Simon, this was a major project. His other hit records were composed, so he claimed, in only a day or two.

As Simon explained in an interview with Jazz and Pop Magazine, "I wanted to create a feeling of comfort. The words are relaxing, warm, almost euphoric. My music has always been different from what's normally on the top ten. I've been quite successful. I hadn't recorded for about a year and a half. The listening public wondered where I was. I knew the song would be successful. I don't buy the American Bandstand success formula. I've always done my own musical

## Subliminal Rock

thing. The secret to me has been a genial fusion of music and lyrics."

Whether the above statement was written by Simon or one of his many publicity writers is irrelevant. The usual vague, meaningless euphemisms for reality—relaxing, warm, euphoric, musical thing, genial fusion—says nothing really about what the composer was doing in "Bridge."

As a very skilled merchant of symbolic values in both words and music, Simon knows better. Illusions are a tough business. In order to reap the millions of dollars he has taken from teen-age record buyers, in the most competitive business in the world, Simon must be a skilled professional. He, his financial backers, musicians, arrangers, and electronic technicians must know precisely what they are doing—or they simply won't succeed. The hundred or so invisible specialists who surround them put everything they had into the song, along with the quarter of a million dollars of capital investment required to launch a new record nationally.

"Bridge," at first hearing, is crude—almost amateurish. The beat is weak and undanceable, even phlegmatic. Neither cracking drums, electric guitars, nor a hard-driving bass were utilized. At the beginning, a weak, psalm-playing piano appeared. After the initial verse, faraway violins, vibraphone, softened bass, and echoing drums formed the background. Indeed, at the time "Bridge" was released, it seemed to have done everything wrong—just the opposite of current trade practices. There is simply no way to explain the success in terms of what was cognitively perceived by music fans. (See Appendix A.)

## A Feeling Massage

"Bridge" dealt primarily with feelings in its target audience, massaging these feelings with subliminal stimuli. When trying to probe the subliminal level of the lyric, the first question was simply, Who is talking to whom about what, and why? Specifically, who was "I"—the person singing? A list of people representing both personal and occupational relationships for teen-agers was prepared. All those included were individuals with whom teen-agers were likely to have a close, familiar, intimate, and trusting relationship—the kind and

## MEDIA SEXPLORATION

quality of relationship suggested by Art Garfunkel's voice on the recording. Included were twenty-two possible designations for "I"—mother, father, motel owner, brother, sister, drug pusher, hairdresser, boyfriend, girl friend, sweetheart, mechanic, minister or priest, gas station attendant, teacher, etc. The list was presented to roughly fifty teen-agers who were asked to check off the single most likely candidate for the "I" in "Bridge."

After they learned what they were supposed to do, roughly 30 percent of the teen-agers refused to play the game. Many rationalized that they could not make up their minds. Others in this group simply refused to try. Avoidance behavior was clearly apparent.

Roughly another 55 percent provided varied answers—mother, father, etc. These appeared random and spread out across the entire list.

Roughly 15 percent of the students cited drug pusher as the "I" in "Bridge."

The reader may consider this possible interpretation as absurd. For a moment, however, consider the hypothetical possibilities.

If the "I" or the singer is a drug pusher, what he is describing in the song is a drug trip. His customer—or addict—is the young audience bewildered by the fast-paced, automated, depersonalized, lonely, complex, and powerful society.

When you're weary, feeling small,  
When tears are in your eyes . . .\*

"Bridge," therefore, becomes symbolically a drug user's guide to withdrawal into a syringe-injected hallucinatory drug experience—most probably heroin—but this could be also interpreted as speed or amphetamines. The lyric extols the promise of drug relief from depression, loneliness, and uncertainty. The music symbolically forms the trip itself. The verses are sung in two-part harmony, indicating to the audience subliminally that two people are on the trip—the listener and their drug-peddler guide.

\*© 1969 Paul Simon. Used with the permission of the publisher.

## Subliminal Rock

The pusher is talking, much like a physician on a television pharmaceutical advertisement, to weary and alienated young people whom the world forces into tears. He is "on your side" when "times get rough" and when "friends can't be found."

The pitchman drug pusher claims he acts as "a bridge over troubled water"—a support to help the audience over the turbulent rapids of day-to-day life. The first verse provides a come-on, an opening pitch, much like the warmup used by insurance or encyclopedia salesmen. The second verse is a stronger focus upon the product through symbolic archetypes and imagery. The third verse really gets down to business, presenting a hard sell, deep in meaning and subliminal significance.

The musical arrangement during the first and second verses suggested a feeling of agitation, discomfort, imbalance, and insecurity. As the music moved into the third verse, parallel with the lyric story line, it conveys a feeling of euphoria, security, and relaxation as the drug takes effect.

## A Search for Security

In the first verse the music begins with a lone piano chording, as Simon specified in the published arrangement, "moderato ...like a spiritual." The spiritual piano is sustained throughout the arrangement, alternately dominant and passive in the background. The piano symbolizes unconscious remnants of childhood feelings such as love and protection derived from Mother or the Sunday School sense of security in being watched over by Jesus.

As Art Garfunkel's voice begins in the first verse, he sings of "being weary, small, of tears, of being down and out." In the published arrangement the piano is directed to play "rubato"—a rhythmic give and take, a lingering or hurrying over notes. Time (meter) is bent. The piano reflects the audience's unstable state of mind or emotion. In the second verse the listener is still "down and out," but now "on the street." The street of life is where the troubled water swirls, the place where society rushes frantically to nowhere. The street is loud, impersonal, and cold. The pusher promises. "when evening falls so hard, I will comfort you."

Evening is symbolic of death and darkness, perhaps the colorlessness of American society.

The pusher declares his willingness to "take your part"—become the audience, suffer for them while they escape through drugs. "When darkness comes and pain is all around," the pusher will provide "a bridge over troubled water." The line, as sung, includes a brief pause before and afterward.

"And pain is all around." Pain in the young audience's minds must be avoided at all costs. Harsh realities and dark images of death must be somehow put aside. As the second verse is sung, the orchestration produced a vague discomfort and feeling of uneasiness.

The rhythmically unstable piano joins a low-key, quiet vibraphone at the beginning of the second verse. The discord literally jars audience attention, as the chord is in a different key from the song. At this point, the electronic bass plays a series of dominant notes which slide from a low E-natural up two octaves to an A-flat. The sliding notes move from an extreme low to an extreme high, unconsciously elevating the audience to a higher plane in the arrangement's subliminal background.

### And Finally the Needle

The third verse involves the actual syringe injection and the comforting assurance that—if needed again—the pusher will be available with more. A long pause appears between the second and third verses, suggesting the time it takes to prepare for a drug injection.

To "sail on" is to be free of fear and inhibition, to achieve the escape sought in the second verse. "Sail" conveys a feeling of light, liveliness, grace, and freedom—as opposed to the second verse's death imagery. "Sail" even suggests the flight of a bird—the release from reality and its pain, free of the social gravity that forces individuals into the dirt of the second verse's "street," energy—not weariness; feeling big, tall, significant—not "feeling small." "Sail on by" is opposed to the second verse's "Lay me down."

"Silvergirl," in the first line of the third verse, is one of the teen-age euphemisms used to describe a hypodermic syringe.

## Subliminal Rock

In "Bridge" the pusher speaks to the syringe as he injects the drug. "Sail on silvergirl." "Silver" refers generally to the shiny needle and "girl," of course, to youth, fertility, rebirth through drugs, and the narcotic itself.

"Sail on by" carries the drug from body into mind. "Your times has come to shine," the pusher says to both the audience and the syringe—time to work or "shine."

"All your dreams are on their way" is a separate sentence, yet on the record sounds like a subordinate clause, part of "Your time has come to shine." Simon, apparently, handles the phrasing like this to catch the audience off guard and more easily reach into their unconscious. The pusher vocalist speaks to his audience after the injection. "All your dreams are on their way." He is heavily pitching the drug, emphasizing its miraculous results. "See how they shine" described the audience's fantasies and dreams as these illusions come alive and true. "If you need a friend, I'm sailing right behind." The pusher and his drug-loaded syringe are right there with you, audience, so don't feel alone.

The last sentence of the third verse differs from the last sentence of the first and second verses. The drug pusher pitches, "I will ease your mind." This might be called the punch line of the drug pitch.

After the users (audience) have tried the drug, after their fantasies have become realities, after they have escaped from the harsh brutalities of life, and after the drug trip is over, the pusher will ease their minds by relaxing their anxieties about drug usage, coming down off the trip, and assure a drug source for the next trip to ease the "troubled water."

After the electric bass's low to high slide in the second verse, the bass works throughout the rest of the song, serving as muted background. At the start of the third verse, the drums are consciously apparent at the beginning of the drug trip. The drums produced a muddy and unreal tempo, quite different from straight timekeeping. The drums, however, usually remained buried deeply in the background under the other instruments.

Only the snare drum intruded upon consciousness with any clarity, but it also remained an unclear, though steady, background echo. The snare copied the heartbeat at seventy-two

beats per minute (4/4 time) during the first two verses. The snare tempo induces a state of prehypnotic suggestibility as the listener perceives the snare only subliminally.

Bass and drums work similarly during the third verse—a thumping seventy-two pulses per minute, carried into the fantasy of "the shining dream" during the third verse.

Violins entered the third verse, adding another fantasy dimension to the music. By increasing the volume of musical background, the subliminal dimensions of the drug trip expanded. The faint piano, however, presented a constant nagging reminder of the audience's once stable and secure past. The at first subdued, then dominant bass, drums, violins, and vibraphones carried the audience along on their trip where "all your dreams are on their way."

### Loneliest Scene in Town

In response to subliminal meanings for words and music, one of America's most repressed forms of sexual communication appears in teen-age dancing. One of the readily observable effects of highly amplified sound or music is isolation. People in a crowded room can be totally isolated from one another by simply increasing the music amplifier's volume level. No one communicates even through eye contact. Speech is not attempted. There is very rarely physical touching. Each individual sits staring into an empty space—usually a very small, unoccupied space. Communication disappears. Each appears carried away by his or her very own, very personal, and very secret fantasies.

When couples dance to highly amplified rock, a similar isolation occurs. Many of the dance movements—pelvic actions, self-touching, and leg and body movements—are frankly sexual. Everyone appears not to notice, however, and the secret is well kept. No touching is permitted, not even with eyes.

The partners skillfully avoid looking at or physically touching their companion. Each appears entirely alone. This isolation is often described by the phrase "doing your own thing." Any overt gesture that involved touching, intimacy, or gentle caressing during these dances would be considered crude, uncouth, and annoying—a violation of both privacy and protocol.

## Subliminal Rock

There is a strong resemblance to these teen-age dances and the relationships observable at a drug party. Anyone who believes marijuana is a party turn-on makes a serious error. Hallucinatory drugs are more accurately described as turn-ins. One of the most effective ways to wreck a party is to introduce pot or hash. Individuals rapidly end up doing their own thing alone. The party fragments quickly from group interaction to individual trips deep inside each person's head. The participants sit on the floor giggling nonsense to themselves. The inside fantasy deludes individuals into believing they are eloquent and sensitively communicative, but it is only another fantasy.

Even today, Americans' unwillingness to deal with the realities of drug usage is astonishing. Should the reader still believe the power of a popular record is insignificant, consider how much advertising media would have to be purchased by an advertiser to reach the audience for any of the records cited in this chapter. Then compare the selling power of the most creative, subliminally loaded, powerful, and most expensive ad possible to create. The selling power would still not even begin to approximate the high-credibility source impact of a single release by an established music group. Why these drug fantasies, designed to appeal only to the unconscious, sell records is not entirely clear nor is it logical or reasonable unless you are willing to accept Freud's notion of the human "death wish" or "death instinct." Nevertheless, death and self destruction are clearly successful subliminal merchandising techniques in alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and other products. Why shouldn't they sell records? Just think—it all began with the Beatles.

# Cultural Conditioning for Addiction

The subject was no more trying to learn something from television than she would be trying to learn something from a landscape while resting on a park bench. Yet television is communication. What shall we say of it, a communication medium that effortlessly transmits huge quantities of information not thought about at the time of exposure, but much of it capable of being stored for later activation?

HERBERT E. KRUGMAN  
Electroencephalographic  
Aspects of Low Involvement

## Addiction as a Marketing Objective

Among the small army of public health specialists who concern themselves with addictive behavior, a new perspective has begun to emerge. Narcotics has turned out to be only the tip of the addiction iceberg. The pathetic heroin user is the obvious, extreme end of the spectrum, involving a usually atypical deviant group within the general society. Narcotics 146

## Cultural Conditioning for Addiction

addicts are apparent only because eventually they must involve themselves in criminal activities to support their habits. Much less obvious, the twentieth century has spawned a whole range of behavioral responses that can only be described as addictive. On an enormous scale, involving billions of invested dollars annually, Americans are induced into a value system that applauds addictive behavior almost as a patriotic duty. This wide spectrum of addictive behavior is socially acceptable and invisible for the most part. The American addict behaves precisely as he has been instructed since birth to behave.

America's most honored, celebrated, and profitable forms of addiction involve alcohol, tobacco, and drugs—the three highest-profit products manufactured and marketed in modern society. The list extends to a whole range of other products. The cost of selling these three products, of which advertising is only a portion, is also the highest for any manufactured product in America. As addictive substances, these three products are mutually reinforcing—heavy drinkers are invariably heavy smokers, and almost always heavy consumers of psychogenic drugs such as analgesics, tranquilizers, antidepressants, etc. These three products all propose chemical solutions for problems of emotional adjustment. According to Morris Chafetz, former Director of HEW's National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), "Alcoholism among both youths and adults has at last been recognized as a modern plague." NIAAA statistics revealed that roughly 10 percent of the over 100 million Americans who drink are already either "problem drinkers" or full-fledged alcoholics. "Problem drinker" is merely a polite way to describe an incipient alcoholic or anyone compulsively involved in alcohol consumption. A teen-ager can develop an alcohol addiction in as short a period as eighteen months. An adult might take ten years or more.

## The Payoff Outside the Corporation

In a July 1974 study of alcoholism, HEW made some startling disclosures about drinking. The annual subsidy paid by all Americans to support the distilling industry is roughly \$25 billion - \$9.5 billion lost in absenteeism, \$8.5 billion lost in

health care directly attributable to alcoholism, \$6.5 billion in motor accidents, and \$.5 billion in research. And these are not just cold financial statistics. During 1973, nineteen thousand Americans were killed in alcohol-related accidents. There is overwhelming evidence that alcohol contributes to heart disease, brain damage, homicide (in 50 percent of U.S. murders, either the victim or the killer had been drinking), and suicide (25 percent of suicides in the United States have high alcoholic content in their blood). In one Ontario study of 22,600 deaths of persons between twenty and seventy, alcohol was responsible for 38 percent of cirrhosis deaths, 22 percent of peptic ulcers, 18 percent of suicides, 15 percent of pneumonia, 16 percent of deaths from cancer of the upper digestive and respiratory tracts, and over 5 percent of heart and artery disease deaths. Alcohol was also involved in 45 percent of deaths by poisoning, 43 percent by accidental fire, and nearly 25 percent of falls and other physical trauma deaths.

Of total deaths in Ontario for the year of the study, 11 percent were clearly alcoholic-related. The alcoholic, it was discovered, had twice the chance of premature death than the nonalcoholic. The average alcoholic's life-span is shortened by ten to twelve years.

Heavy drinkers are seven times more prone to marital separations or divorce than the general U.S. population, and nearly half the annual 55,000 automobile deaths and the 1 million major injuries involve alcohol.

About 13,000 people die each year from liver cirrhosis. The HEW study revealed a close correlation between heavy drinking and cancer of the liver, mouth, and throat. Heavy drinkers have a fifteen times greater probability of cancer than do nonsmoking teetotalers. The nondrinking smoker has only a four times greater probability of cancer than the non-smoker.

### Teen-Aged Drinkers

Lowering of the drinking age to eighteen, occurring in various states with the strong though subtle support of the distilling industry, has had disastrous effects. The HEW study revealed that one out of four American teen-agers now classi-

fies at "alcoholic" or "problem drinker." Michigan reported a 141 percent increase in arrests for drunken driving the first year after its legal drinking age was reduced to eighteen. Parents, strangely, are leading the pressure groups now demanding a lowering of the drinking age in every state. Many are often relieved to find their children involved with drinking rather than drugs—though the two are consumed in combination by most teen-agers today.

In San Mateo County, California, only a few miles south of Sun Francisco, school officials discovered in 1970 that 11 percent of ninth-grade boys (thirteen- to fourteen-year-olds) admitted drinking alcoholic beverages fifty or more times during the year. By 1973, when the county repeated the survey, the figure had jumped to 23 percent. Among seventeen- and eighteen-year-old seniors, frequent drinkers rose from 27 percent to an astonishing 40 percent. Fewer seventeen- to eighteen-year-old girls drank, the study reported, but were catching up fast—29 percent in 1973, compared with 14 percent in 1970. It would be obscene to translate this suffering and degradation merely into dollars—the usual criterion of value in North America. But if you did, the cost would be far in excess of the \$25 billion price for alcohol consumption.

### Addicts Are Just Like Everyone

In the past, middle-aged men appeared the most prone to alcoholism. The pattern is rapidly reversing. During the early 1970s, there appeared a sharp increase in alcoholism among the twenty to thirty age group and among women. During the 1960s, roughly 20 percent of alcoholics treated were women, but by 1974 over 25 percent were women. In certain localities such as Miami, Florida, the ratio reached 50-50.

Skid row derelicts account for less than 5 percent of U.S. alcoholics today. The other 95 percent include everyone—most of whom pass unnoticed until they become involved in sickness, accidents, suicides, or marital and employment problems. Perpetuated by the alcohol industry and society in general is the age-old myth that alcoholics are special people with some basic defect in personality or character. If so, no research over the past fifty years has been able to substantiate the mythology. So far, no one has discovered any common

## MEDIA SEXPLORATION

denominator of personality, character, biology, education or income among alcoholics.

To provide even a conservative measure of the power and affluence of the alcohol industry, the U.S. Commerce Department listed total alcohol industry revenues (after federal, state, and local taxes) at nearly \$18.5 billion in 1973. This is far below the amount paid by Americans to subsidize the industry.

Alcohol, tobacco, and drug advertising are presently the heaviest in print media—so heavy, in fact, that if alcohol, tobacco, and drug ads were suddenly banned, very possibly about half the advertising dependent publications in the country would go out of business. America's economically hard-pressed newspapers would suffer severely if they lost their ad lineage for any of these three products. Many would simply collapse into bankruptcy.

### The Consumption Addict

The media know their drinkers well and have studied them in great detail for many years. Though they rarely admit it, the knowledge that the media, distillers, brewers, and winemakers have about their consumers is vastly beyond anything available at NIAAA or in any university library. Perhaps the best description of heavy users—the so-called market within a market—was supplied by the Brand Rating Index (BRI), one of the fanciest and most expensive of media's national research organizations:

"Purely and simply, heavy users are the most important customers you have. They are the men who consume well beyond the average ... the men who account for a markedly disproportionate share of product purchases and usage. As a rule, these heavy users represent an unusually small percentage of the total population. In other words, this active buying minority is the vital purchasing core of the prime market for luxury products and quality merchandise."

BRI, as well as many other commercial research organizations, can supply incredibly detailed information on heavy consumers for virtually every major product sold in America.

These heavy consumers can be easily correlated and analyzed into complex psychographic and demographic profiles.

## Cultural Conditioning for Addiction

The statistical data goes on and on and on—boring facts for most of us, but they form a sales-strategy bible for anyone in mass merchandising.

Over 85 percent of all adults in the United States use alcohol. But that's not specific enough. Media—in behalf of advertisers—aim at highly specialized groups. For example, if you are selling only vodka, you are not interested in how many rum drinkers might read a particular magazine or newspaper where your ad appears.

The modern advertisers' needs are highly specific. He must seek out the medium that offers him the best deal: minimum cost per thousand reader/vodka drinkers. Media's prime content function is to deliver a suitable number and quality of readers or audience at a competitive price. And the advertiser is not interested only in just plain everyday vodka drinkers.

The advertiser knows, for example, that 8.1 percent of the total United States adult male population accounts for 83.3 percent of all male vodka consumption. Further, the vodka advertiser knows—and can check the data validity from several sources—that only 2.8 percent of adult males in the United States are heavy vodka drinkers, consuming four or more vodka drinks weekly on the average. U.S. vodka drinkers combine vodka with other beverages. But this 2.8 percent of U.S. male, heavy vodka drinkers accounts for 63.3 percent of all vodka consumed by men.

Heavy product users are the most desirable readership or audience for any medium. These heavies often perform an interpersonal leadership function, especially in alcoholic beverages. If you wish to know of a good Scotch, just ask someone who drinks a lot of Scotch.

BRI defines "heavy alcoholic beverage user" as one who drinks "fifteen or more distilled spirit drinks per week," or roughly two drinks (3 ounces) per day. The "problem drinker" and "alcoholic" are in the upper end of the heavy-user spectrum, accounting for the heaviest alcohol consumption of all.

One very elaborate and expensive study commissioned by Enquire magazine gave a detailed picture of how publishers deliver to the advertiser the heavy consumers for an enormous range of products. The cost per thousand for heavy consumer readers was compared for most major publications

## MEDIA SEXPLOITATION

in America. For example, 4.7 percent of Esquire's readers during 1969—something just under 1 million total circulation—were heavy vodka drinkers. Esquire sells them to vodka advertisers on a cost-per-thousand basis for a full black-and white page at \$42.91. Not bad for a thousand heavy vodka drinkers, especially when compared with their competition. They would have cost \$58.92 per thousand in Look magazine.

### HEAVY VODKA USERS (4 or more drinks per week)

Cost Thousand (for Publication	% of Total Readers	per Readers full-page black and white)
Life	4.2	\$57.20
Look	3.9	58.92
Newsweek	4.9	36.45
New Yorker	4.4	56.58
Playboy	5.2	41.75
Sports Illustrated	4.4	42.55
Time	4.6	48.35
U.S. News & World Report	5.7	39.19
Esquire	4.7	42.91

Source: BRI Study, *The Market Within a Market*

The value of the deal, of course, must take into consideration other elements in the size and quality of their various readerships. The main reason the general circulation publications such as Life and Look ceased publication was their inability to compete in these specialized readership consumer categories. They had the two highest costs per thousand readers in most major product categories of any publication in the country. Television is a much more efficient and cheaper medium for advertisers who pursue general rather than specialized consumers.

## Cultural Conditioning for Addiction

### Addicts Are Cheaper by the Thousand

BRI provided similar information and prices per thousand readers for heavy drinkers of Scotch, bourbon, rye or blended whiskey, gin, rum, wine, brandy, cognac, cordials or liqueurs, beer and ale, and ready-to-serve and prepared-mix cocktails. It might be helpful to review the cost-per-thousand ratios for heavy drinkers of all alcoholic beverages—many of whom would be included among the 10 million alcoholics and problem drinkers in the United States today.

#### ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE HEAVY USERS (15 or more drinks weekly):

Mention	% of Total Readers black and white)	Cost per Thousand Readers (for full-page
Look	Life 9.7 8.9	\$24.82 25.39
Newsweek	11.2	15.94
New Yorker	15.3	16.29
Playboy	11.4	19.21
Sports Illustrated	11.5	16.21
	Time 10.6	21.03
U.S. News & World Report	12.5	17.89
Esquire	13.6	14.74

The above information is only a small proportion of the total data available to editors and publishers on U.S. drinking and drinkers. Esquire paid a very large research fee in order to brag to its potential advertisers about the high proportion of heavy drinkers among their readership and their low cost-per-thousand delivery rate.

### Subliminally Massaged Addicts

Virtually all alcohol advertising employs subliminal stimuli. One reason, certainly, is that heavy consumers of any product-whom most media content is directed—are likely to

be highly susceptible to subliminal stimuli used in relation to that product.

One of the booze industry's more cynical attacks upon the vulnerable young (toward whom they are strongly discouraged from directing their advertising by several government agencies and national media associations) appeared recently in an alcohol industry public relations poster distributed widely throughout the world. Portrayed were two eighteen-year-olds—clean-cut, clear-cut, neat, forthright, and mature youngsters who peered challengingly from the poster. The caption reads, "You're old enough to drink. Are you mature enough?" What teen-ager could resist replying, "Of course I'm mature enough. My parents think I'm only an irresponsible immature child. I'll show them by drinking..."

That the alcohol industry should disguise their advertising to the young consumer behind a facade of concern for alcohol abuse should not surprise anyone. It is not illegal and it is most profitable.

Most of the early life conditioning to accept alcohol is media-induced. Part of the American culture, used cleverly by the alcoholic beverage industry, involves the identification of masculinity with drinking. Virtually all American young men are taught to believe that being able to "hold your liquor" is a sign of manhood. This is believed by many parents, as well as their children. It costs the alcohol industry very little to sustain widely accepted cultural myths.

### The Myth of Moderate Drinking

Very infrequently, on television (which still competes heavily for beer and wine advertising) a news special or dramatization deals—sometimes eloquently—with alcoholism. Generally, though, as a residual background to the nation's illusion about itself, media keep the drunk well out of sight. In a drunken society, drunks are almost completely invisible.

Media ia deeply indebted to the alcohol industry for millions in advertising support. These figures are extremely conservative estimates by the U.S. Commerce Department. In 1970 newspapers alone received well over \$121 million in advertising from the alcohol industry; magazines received \$98 million; and television—just for beer and wine advertising-

\$67 million. These amounts have vastly increased over the past five years, now totaling over \$600 million annually, a massive media environment.

The allegation by publishers and broadcasters that media content is unaffected by advertising is sheer nonsense. In behalf of their advertisers, American news media often soft-pedal or rationalize such problems as pollution, alcohol and drug abuse, and cigarette smoking. Audiences are conditioned to accept these calamities as "The price of progress," "You can't change human nature," or "We must maintain a reasonable position." During 1972, when cigarette advertising was banned from television and heavy ad budgets were up for grabs, many "respectable" newspapers across America ran editorials defending the right to publish cigarette advertising as "freedom of the press" in a most cynical disregard for the public interest.

Alcoholism has all but disappeared from media content. back in the 1930—40 era, alcoholism was of a much lesser magnitude, and the alcoholic was visible and very obvious—even joked about. Drunks as objects of humor frequently appeared in print, films, radio programs, and in the theater. There are vastly more drunks around today than thirty years ago—both in total number and as a proportion of our population. Yet they have become the invisible men and women of American society. When they infrequently surface, they are perceived as pathetic aberrations to be avoided or dealt with only through professional or institutional intermediaries. In the media fantasies that presume to show American life, alcoholism appears an insignificant problem. A curious example of media's concern for its heavy advertisers appeared when the HEW 1974 study was announced. In every mention of the research on radio-TV newscasts or publication in magazines or newspapers, a clause or phrase was inserted into the story to make it clear that the pathological alcohol consumption was unrelated to "normal," "social," or "light" drinkers—implying that excessive drinkers were a special type of people.

According to a recent public health survey, media conditioning leads most Americans to conclude that alcohol is much less harmful today than it was before. In America, at least, just the opposite is true.

Another oft-repeated media myth often reminds us, "Europeans know how to drink." Europeans do, indeed! In France, where you rarely see a drunk on the street because of the tolerance levels developed from the world's heaviest alcohol consumption, 42 percent of total health expenditures involve alcohol-related diseases, 50 percent of total hospital beds are occupied by patients with alcohol-related sicknesses, and nearly 10 percent of France's adult population is chronically impaired due to alcohol.

### Saturation Life-Styles

The United States appears rapidly headed toward the saturation levels of France, where increases in consumption long ago leveled off. France's national alcohol disaster has been exhaustively studied. And yet, in the name of making a buck the media continue to lead American consumers down this misery-drenched path.

In stories widely publicized by news media, the U.S. Cooperative Commission on the Study of Alcoholism (an industry public relations front) recommended, "... the convivial use of beverage alcohol and drinking with meals should be encouraged, the so-called 'beverage of moderation' [beer] should be stressed, and drinking should become an incidental part of routine activities."

The above statement was the typical rationalized garbage published by Nixon-appointed commissions investigating the public welfare. Such recommendations, often heavily publicized by news media, totally ignored the epidemiological evidence on alcoholic consumption levels. Numerous studies have unequivocally established that neither beer nor wine is a drink of "moderation" (whatever that may mean). In alcoholism, the type of beverage is irrelevant. Domestic wine is the cheapest source of alcohol in American society, beer—quite possibly—the most expensive. Most U.S. hospitals have patients waiting to die from terminal liver disease who have never drunk any alcoholic beverage except beer and wine.

The United States Government gains an annual king's ransom in taxes from consumer taxes on alcohol. But the Nixon Administration appropriated a miserly \$138 million in taxpayer dollars to HEW's National Institute of Alcohol Abuse

## Cultural Conditioning for Addiction

and Alcoholism for 1974 to be applied in research, training, community healthservices, and public education—not even a good-sized drop in the bucket.

This \$138 million is less than a quarter of what the industry spent on advertising during 1974 (over \$600 million) to create and sustain an extraordinarily successful marketing system. The nearly 10 percent of the North American adult population who are now alcoholics or problem drinkers constitutes a calculated (and apparently acceptable) casualty rate that sustains corporation profits for such organizations as Schneley's, Seagram's, and United Distillers. To further illustrate the cynical involvement of media in alcohol merchandising, the April 22, 1974, issue of Time devoted a cover story to "Alcoholism: New Victims, New Treatments."

The story, like so many major editorial efforts by the affluent and powerful national magazine, was well written and factual as far as it went. The story emphasized the distilling industry's concern over alcoholism, especially among the young. The theme that drinking in moderation is good for the society was clearly apparent.

The story emphasized the \$250,000 spent annually by the liquor industry to combat excessive drinking and that the industry had "awakened to the problems caused by excessive use of its products." No mention was made of the over \$600 million spent in advertising that year to increase both alcohol consumers and the quantities they consume. The article was a public relations piece for the distilling industry. As with the food advertisers who fight to place their ads adjacent to articles on dieting and weight reduction, Time had no trouble selling liquor advertising in its alcoholism issue. That particular issue was jam-packed with full-page, four-color advertisements for alcoholic beverages—easily approaching a half-million dollars' worth.

The most skillfully executed—and expensive—advertising artwork is utilized in these ads. With their high profits and heavy proportion (6 percent) of sales invested back in advertising, the liquor industry can afford the most creative artists available in America. A single page of advertising art can easily cost \$10,000 or much more, not counting display space. But if that ad sells several million dollars' worth of

product or brand, it is well worth the price. Several excellent examples of subliminal artwork in alcohol advertising were included in my earlier book, Subliminal Seduction.

### Merry Christmas From Beefeater

The subliminal themes of love and death still slyly decorate alcohol advertising in magazines, newspapers, and on billboards. One four-color, full-page Beefeater gin ad that appeared in The New Yorker, Newsweek, Time, and many other publications just before Christmas 1972 displayed the dignified, foil-capped carton just unwrapped—the white gift-wrapping paper crumpled in the background (see Figure 35).

The stalwart Beefeater stands at ease on the label, firmly grasping his ornamental phallic lance. Embedded mosaics of SEX were lightly etched into the surface of the ad in numerous places. These faint embeds may not be completely visible in the reproduction, but there is much more to perceive that will be visible. By the way, the reader might give some thought to how the word Beefeater relates subliminally to American culture. At the conscious, ego-flattering level, the suggestion is a hearty, robust, virile man who eats beef(?)

We can see from the BRI study (which defined heavy gin drinkers as those who take four or more drinks a week) that only 2.6 percent of adult male heavy gin drinkers account for 52.5 percent of all gin consumed by men. These heavy drinkers constitute 5.8 percent of Time readers, which has 4.4 readers per copy, or over 26 million total readers who are 55 percent male (14.5 million). The space cost of the ad would have been in the neighborhood of \$60,000. According to BRI, Time magazine merchandised their heavy gin drinking readers at a cost per thousand of \$38.46. This figure is based partially on 1969 costs. Heavy gin consumers are unquestionably more expensive on a cost-per-thousand basis today.

Just looking at the Beefeater ad, it is difficult to tell how this very heavy transaction could be triggered by a layout so simple, ordinary, and undistinguished. These banal qualities in the ad are precisely guaranteed to elicit complete conscious indifference.

But look! In the paper wrapping beside the bottle—if you follow the line of the label's BEEFEATER to the right, just a

## Cultural Conditioning for Addiction

fraction of an inch to the left of where the line would intersect the right edge of the white wrapping paper, is the tip of a faintly etched nose. Following the nose upward and to the left, there is an eye socket—a dark, faint shadow. The eye socket shadow appears in a straight line from the top gold border of the label within the white wrapper. From the eye socket downward to the right, it is quite easy to locate the nose, mouth, and jaw of a skull or death mask. The Beefeater death mask appears to be under a shroud formed by the white wrapping paper. Merry Christmas anyone? Skulls, as well as a wide variety of other death symbols, have been discovered in the advertising of most major alcoholic beverage brands sold in North America. Some readers may find this fact disturbing or unsettling, especially if they have been brand-loyal boozers. But it is time they discovered that distilling corporations know far more about their real motives for drinking than they do themselves.

### The Self-Destruct Syndrome

It is difficult to rationalize death symbols' ability to sell booze. One theory might be that drinkers sufficiently saturated with gin may not care if they live or die. Another theory might arise from the Freudian concept of death wish or death instinct. Then again, perhaps defying death—even subliminally—may enhance a drinker's self-image of masculinity and virility. No one knows why for certain, but death sells extremely well.

Responding to the Poetzel Effect (discussed in the Exorcist chapter) the consumer never even suspects how his unconscious motives or drives were tapped by media manipulators. Worse, the death appeal is likely to be much more intense an unconscious purchase motivation among the young, especially those experiencing puberty.

After several years of dealing with skulls, genitals, and taboo sex embedded in advertising, the simple themes become highly repetitious and rather dull. After all, love and death have been a basic part of human existence for over a million years. Every once in a while, however, a Madison Avenue artist outdoes himself and develops a new twist to the subliminal flimflam.

One curious subliminal slip of the copywriter's Freudian tongue appeared in national advertising for Canadian Mist whisky. For years, these ads have been published regularly in such periodicals as Playboy and The New Yorker. The ad series is titled simply, "Canada at its best." The art usually portrays a wilderness scene, a lake or forest, often reminiscent of the Canadian image, which, of course, is different in the United States than it is in Canada. The copy head's play on words is interesting when you simply move the space from between at and its to between the a and t in at. The subliminal line then reads, "Canada a tits best."

Again, in a tit culture, there is no greater security or source of oral gratification than, a tit (symbolic or otherwise), preferably mother's but most any tit will do. The subliminal identification between whiskey and milk must also be a source of financial security for the distilling corporations. The connection is reinforced at Christmas with eggnog ads, and throughout the year with other "milky" drinks such as an Alexander or pink lady—not "pink girl," mind you, but "pink lady." (Ladies are mothers, girls are not.)

### Where Is Johnnie Walker Walking?

One of the more famous (or infamous) Johnnie Walker Scotch advertisements placed in The New Yorker, Time, Playboy, etc., portrayed the bottle two-thirds empty with ice cubes immersed in a golden brown liquid. Obviously, the ice cubes have been painted on a photograph of a bottle—a common technique that most ad executives publicly deny (see Figure 36).

The label is partially hidden. But reading up along the edge of the label on the left, the word DED appears. If you consciously thought about it at all—and no one but the agency execs apparently did—you would have rationalized that the letters BON were merely on the hidden side of the label. Perhaps a million dollars was spent buying space for this layout in national and local publications. Is it conceivable some photographer could have accidentally permitted such a critical and frightening word to appear in the ad? Hardly!

The ice cubes painted in the bottle are also curious. If you turn the ad on its left side, a very distinct face—complete

with moustache and goatee—appears cleverly hidden away in the ice cube. The ad was shown to several hundred people without one discovering the hidden face, even though many of them were experienced in analyzing subliminal media dimensions (see Figure 37).

Above the face is a strange-looking hat or cap—perhaps a turban, somehow reminiscent of the hats worn popularly at the time of the French Revolution. Once you have had them pointed out, the head and hat are so obvious that it is difficult to believe you repressed the embed when you first saw the ad. The face appears to be bravely smiling. Can you figure out what is so funny? Do not read further until you have figured out the humor of what is going on in the ice cube.

Just below the head, in the area where the neck should be, there is a large ax with its blade buried deeply within the neck of the turbaned head. The ad's subliminally perceived trigger mechanism is, simply, a beheading.

Beheadings are pretty much out of date today except as symbolically motivating devices. A picture of a man with his head cut off is a symbolic castration—the symbolic promise, indeed, of Johnnie Walker Scotch. Could this conceivably be a reason for the heavy Scotch drinker's self-indulgence, providing a reinforcement, justification, and rationalization for impotence fear? Having drunk too much is always a justification for avoiding sex.

A veritable mountain of data on alcoholism is available. Curiously, however, none of this data focuses upon the highly obvious relationship between mass media and drinking. It is a proven fact that the more drinkers in a society and the more they drink, the higher the proportion of alcoholics. Commercial media are almost singly responsible for increases both in drinkers and quantities drunk in North America over the past several decades.

If media advertising reinforcements for alcoholic consumption were suddenly stopped—in the unlikely case any political administration would brave attacks from both the liquor industry and the press (this would probably be presented to the public as interfering with freedom of the press) there would still be alcoholism. The long-term effects of subliminal programming for consumption may endure in some unconscious memory systems throughout life. The high rate of increase in

consumption should almost immediately decrease. But a decade or more might pass before significant decreases in consumption and alcoholism would occur.

Media advertising—like all advertising and sales promotion efforts—has two specific objectives: increase the number of consumers and increase the quantity of consumption. In alcoholic beverages, this also means an increase in alcoholics (very heavy consumers). It is quite clear and extremely simple. So simple, in fact, it is hard to believe—considering the millions in public funds spent annually on alcoholism research—that no one has put it together before this.

# The Filter Tip Medicine Show

Because men are in a group, and therefore weakened, receptive, and in a state of psychological regression, they pretend all the more to be "strong individuals." The mass man is clearly sub-human, but pretends to be superhuman. He is more suggestible, but insists he is more forceful; he is more unstable, but thinks he is firm in his convictions ...

Democracy is based on the concept that man is rational and capable of seeing clearly what is in his own interest, but the study of public opinion suggests this is a highly doubtful proposition.

JACQUES ELLUL  
Propaganda

## Puffing Their Way to Oblivion

There are an estimated 55 million smokers in the United States. In spite of intensive antismoking media campaigns over the past five years, American Cancer Society studies re-163

vealed more people are smoking more cigarettes today than ever before. The tobacco industry spends well over \$250 million annually on advertising, most of which is focused upon young people under twenty.

Like the distilling industry, tobacco marketers plow about 6 percent of their total income back into advertising. But each year some smokers die off. A small percentage (very small) quit, and a few switch to pipe or cigars in the vain hope this may improve their survival chances. The smoker withdrawal rate is carefully calculated and studied by all major tobacco corporations. Should this rate suddenly begin to increase sharply, their investments would be in serious jeopardy. But they have nothing to worry about as long as they can advertise.

There are only two ways for a tobacco manufacturer to obtain new smokers for his brand. He can pirate smokers from competing brands, or he can go after new smokers, conditioning them to consumption long before they have taken their first puff.

Pirating is usually attempted by give-aways, contests, rewards, etc., but in the industry, pirating is generally looked upon as an ineffective and very expensive marketing technique. Pirated smokers are highly prone to change brands once again in response to new promotions by competing brands.

Were you to build a mathematical model of the American tobacco consumer market (which was actually done by most major tobacco manufacturers years ago), you would classify brand-changing smokers by such correlations as their time as smokers, quantities smoked daily, age smoking began, brand changing characteristics and frequencies, and include data on smoking practices, sexual and social behavior, etc.

Normal consumer brand changing usually cancels itself out over several years. One brand may lose, say, 8 percent of its consumers to one competitor, but pick up roughly the same amount from other brands. It is difficult for an individual brand to hold its own in this game of musical cigarette brands. So, new brand names constantly appear; old ones disappear.

Several years ago, a major cigarette manufacturer established in a series of research interviews that their market

had distinct basic brand-changing patterns for males and females. Variations for males and females were calculated by age group, geographical location, psychological predispositions toward change, and other demographic and psychographic criteria. From the basic data, it was easy for a computer to grind out an enormous variety of correlated information. For example, they could accurately measure present brand preferences and compare them in an algebraic matrix with time smoking the present brand and brands formerly smoked. The system produced highly accurate predictions for future brand changing patterns, predictions which gave the manufacturer virtual control of his market at least until his competitors built their own system. Like cattle being herded to market, smokers behaved predictably in response to media instructions.

An enormous variety of information can be quite inexpensively developed which tells a marketing strategist just how to sell his product, much as if he was playing a highly sophisticated game of multidimensional chess. Specifically, the above survey discovered that around half the market's cigarette consumers had never changed brands: 41 percent of males and 50 percent of females. This dramatically demonstrated the

value of forming solid brand loyalties among young smokers. Many in this market stayed with their initial brand for life, or at least for a very long time.

### The Musical Chairs of Brand Changing

Of the 59 percent of males and 50 percent of females who had changed brands, change frequencies correlated by demographic and psychographic criteria provided a functional basis for market control and management:

TIME WITH PRESENT BRAND	MALE	FEMALE
3 years or more	58%	64%
1-2 years	18%	13%
9-12 months	19%	17%
6-9 months	2%	1%
3-6 months	3%	4%
0-3 months	1%	1%

## MEDIA SEXPLOITATION

Each of these percentages was individually correlated by forty-three separate categories such as age, education, income, and geographic location. One brand may obtain a monetary profitable advantage, but heavy and sustained market movements are relatively stable for most major companies. This is the major role of high-volume competitive advertising—to keep any one brand from gaining a quick ascendancy.

Occasionally, as happened with Winston, a brand is able through skillful market management (a euphemism for people manipulation) to capture and hold a large market segment, at least for a while. But this doesn't happen very often. Most successful cigarette marketing is a long, tedious effort. Today the game is played with high-speed computing equipment which can handle the staggering arrays of consumer variables.

In repeated studies of smoking behavior, virtually no statistically significant group of U.S. smokers has ever been able to distinguish one brand from another from the tobacco flavor. In one "flavor" study—actually an image study—nearly 20 percent of the smokers tested could not even tell if the test cigarettes were lit. These tests were made on major brands sold in U.S. markets. There would be obvious differences between "Virginia" and "Black" and menthol and plain tobaccos.

Image advertising, labeling, and peer-group conditioning toward a brand determines flavor, aroma, satisfaction, and taste. In cigarette marketing, the most important and competed for segment of the consumer market is the input—the new smoker who if managed properly will consume thousands of dollars' worth of tobacco products during his life, even though his life expectation is substantially reduced because of his addictive consumption.

### The New Addicts

The tobacco industry carefully studies the new cigarette consumers who usually increase national sales between 8 and 16 percent annually.

Most of these new smokers are young, under eighteen. The average age of the new U.S. smoker is fourteen with a

## The Filter Tip Medicine Show

measurable group between ten and twelve and a decreasing proportion going down as low as five and six. Boys begin smoking younger than girls, but—as in alcohol consumption—girls are catching up fast.

Properly conditioning young smokers to cigarette consumption ideally begins several years before they purchase their first pack. To firmly establish the addiction—from first puff to inhalation—usually requires about six months.

In one specific example several years ago, the FTC began making loud noises about the industry's use in ads of young people and athletic heroes idealized by the young. The tobacco industry, dedicated as usual to the nation's welfare, immediately removed from its ads any obvious appeal to the young.

At the time, an independent market research group was contracted to study audience reactions in a test market to a series of Liggett and Myers Chesterfield radio commercials. The client was J. Walter Thompson, the world's largest advertising agency (\$120 million annual billing). JWT later came to prominence during the Watergate scandal as the former employer of H. R. Haldeman and a half-dozen implicated Nixon White House aides. (Incidentally, it is remarkable how American newspapers and magazines played down the implications of so many JWT employees being involved in the Watergate scandal. If mentioned at all, the fact was deemphasized as totally insignificant.)

The Chesterfield radio ad series utilized a very bouncy melody and lyric accompanied by finger snapping. Researchers were assigned to penetrate very low income public housing (so-called ghetto areas) with an in-depth questionnaire.

The Chesterfield questionnaire was a complex and devious device that collected information from interviews with entire families. After initiating field interviews, the staff slowly began—as the completed interviews came in—to realize that the radio commercials being tested had no conscious significance whatsoever for adults. Adults could not remember the brand, the jingle made little sense to them, and most appeared completely disinterested in Chesterfields. Strangely, Chesterfield was not a widely preferred brand among the low-income workers JWT wanted interviewed. At first, it ap-

peared as though something had gone wrong with the marketing strategy.

Then the tabulations on interviews with children between eight and fifteen began to appear. The ingenious marketing plan became apparent. Both boys and girls were memorizing the bouncy commercial. Many could recite it word for word. They frequently whistled the melody while snapping their fingers. Only about 20 percent of these youngsters smoked at the time of the research, but it would have been interesting to interview them a year later.

The BRI study cited earlier defined "very heavy smokers" as using one pack or more a day. When the BRI report was published in 1969, only 16.7 percent of adult men smoked two packs or more a day. These heavy smokers, however, accounted for 57.4 percent of all cigarettes smoked by men. This figure for heavy smokers is much, much higher today.

On a cost per thousand for very heavy smokers, national publications were merchandising their tobacco addicts at the following prices:

**CIGARETTES: VERY HEAVY SMOKERS (2 Packs or More Daily)**

Cost Thousand (for Publication	% of Total Readers black and white)	per Readers full-page
Esquire	20.3	\$ 9.87
Life	18.7	12.86
Look	17.8	12.77
Newsweek	16.8	10.65
New Yorker	19.8	12.61
Playboy	20.8	10.48
Sports Illustrated	19.1	9.74
Time	17.6	12.62
U.S. News & World Report	16.1	13.84

In addition to very heavy cigarette smokers, the BRI study also classified cigar and pipe smokers on a cost per thousand

basis for the above publications. For example, 10.9 percent of adult men accounted for 97.5 percent of all cigar smoking. Further, only 11.8 percent of adult men accounted for 99.1 percent of all pipe tobacco consumed by men.

### That Very Special Moment

In the February 1974 issue of Penthouse was published what must be one of the truly great subliminal advertisements of all time. "This ... is the L&M moment" (see Figure 38). Two attractive mature models appeared against a dark background, suggesting night, privacy, and isolation. The man's hand holds a gold cigarette lighter, the flame lighting her cigarette before his, his cigarette held closely and intimately near hers while the flame ignites her tip. She cups his hand gently in hers. The moment is one of great tenderness, affection, and warmth.

The female model is dressed in a metallic cocktail or dinner gown. Her earrings and hair suggest they are out on the town. Her wedding band appears on the hand holding his—a married couple sharing an evening of togetherness. Romantic?

Though numerous SEX embeds appear on the model's face, there doesn't appear to be anything really exciting in the ad that would send anyone racing down to the corner store for a carton of L&M cigarettes. Pretty dull stuff for Penthouse with its emphasis upon so-called mature sex—mainly the whip and boots variety.

The L&M ad appeared on page 56 of the magazine. The preceding page is somewhat more interesting—a portrait of a model's genital area (see Figure 39). The sadomasochistic suggestion in the portrait is hardly subtle. A pink rose is portrayed with its flower (the rose's reproductive organ) adjacent to the model's pubic hair. The rose stem is bound by a white (virginal?) garter, one thorn having pricked the inside of the model's thigh. The blood, of course, was merely painted the leg to supply another fantasy for the reader's ever-frustrated sexuality. But as the page is turned, and light penetrates through both the L&M ad and the rose-with-vagina, a curious scene appears (see Figure 40).

Had the layout artist wanted the reader to perceive the il-

lusion consciously, it would have been quite easy to arrange. But consider the rather shocking idea of connecting—at the subliminal level—darkness and light with the womb and oral gratification (cigarettes in the mouth often substitute symbolically in ads for vaginal and phallic symbols). See-through subliminal illusions have added a completely new dimension to the merchandising of addiction.

At first glance the "L&M moment" is outrageously funny. But consider the 55 million addicted cigarette smokers in the United States and the 300,000 tobacco-related deaths annually—roughly six times more casualties than were produced by the entire Korean War.

### A Victory on the Ice

Hockey attracts male spectators who breathlessly watch other men display brutal masculinity. Like so many similar sports, hockey is a male struggle for dominance with clearly sexual motives and implications—homosexual rather than heterosexual, however.

Hockey was the subject for one of the Benson & Hedges advertisements. The broken, extra-large-king-size cigarette is a playoff on the theme of problems created by a large erect penis. The campaign, modestly titled "America's Favorite Cigarette Break," has included dozens of humorous insights into America's preoccupation with large penises.

A two-page four-color B&H advertisement, which appeared in the January 14, 1972, issue of *Life*, in *Look*, and a score of other national publications, portrayed spectators presumably watching a fight while two players crush a referee against the railing (see Figure 41).

This ad must have been perceived by at least 50 million individuals in numerous national and local magazines and newspapers. Most readers would have perceived the ad for only two or three seconds. Whatever was in the complex display that sold Benson & Hedges cigarettes had to get into the reader's head within seconds, or the ad was useless.

Few, if any, viewers would study the ad. Had they looked more carefully, however, they would have noticed several rather remarkable inconsistencies.

First, the eight "spectators"—models who work for \$75 to

## The Filter Tip Medicine Show

\$150 per hour—do not really appear to be acting like a hockey audience watching a fight on the ice. They are kidding, funning, acting with mock concern. The spectator on the top left only pretends to be covering his eyes. The one on the top right feigns a startled, surprised expression. The man with the broken cigarette actually appears to be smiling.

The two struggling players' expressions are also curious. Their eyes appear laughing and humorous. They are grasping and hitting in jest, certainly not in anger. They could almost be celebrating a victory. The eyes of the referee, who will decide the issue, cannot be seen. We do not know what he is thinking. The meaning of shadowed or concealed eyes varies from culture to culture, but in America when eyes are hidden, so are thoughts. The referee's whistle is at arm's length. He is not yet ready to blow it.

The two players, from different teams, appear boisterously celebrating some mutual accomplishment. The ad was studied with a pupillometer—a camera machine that tracks fovea (a pinpoint-sized area in the eye's retina) saccades (rapid movements from focal point to focal point). The focal point concentration was in the central triangle formed by the top player's elbow and the coach's and bottom player's heads. The fovea did not dwell for any significant period on the spectators or on the bottom portion where the hand protrudes from the pile of bodies.

If you were uncritical and only casually perceived it, the protruding right hand would seem to belong to the referee, But look again!

### The Right Hand's Left-Handed Glove

There is no possible way in which the right hand could belong to any of the three bodies, unless the referee's arm was severed and the hand pulled through the bodies. The effect was created by the artist gluing a hand on the photograph and then rephotographing after he had retouched the layout. Someone went to a lot of trouble over this hand. Why?

From evidence developed during hypnosis experiments, the unconscious brain appears very sensitive to dissonance of any sort. Conscious perception often overlooks these anxiety-producing inconsistencies, repressing the dissonance and smooth-

ing over the perceptual rough edges. This is the process that enables us often to hide from ourselves almost anything we desire, if we desire strongly enough. However, the dissonance caused by the disembodied hand would register unconsciously. The hand would direct unconscious perception to the empty glove lying on the ice.

An empty left-hand glove or gauntlet is rich in archetypal symbolism: a right-hand glove cast down is a challenge to a superior, a left-hand glove, to an inferior. This left-hand glove apparently belongs to the hockey player in the red and blue costume on top.

Before reading further, look quickly at the name on the back of the hockey glove. Take the first idea that pops into your head. Please do not read further until you try to decipher the name.

On the top hockey player's padding appears the word COOPER, a widely known manufacturer of hockey equipment. On the glove, however, the letters have been carefully manipulated to form, quite distinctly, the word CANCER (see Figure 42). During tests on the ad, about half the test subjects who smoked either could not make out the word or saw the word COOPER on the glove. When invited to look more closely, most finally perceived CANCER. All the test subjects who did not smoke had no trouble perceiving CANCER. Very likely the ad was displayed in many national publications on at least half a million dollars' worth of pages, and carefully pretested before such a large investment was approved.

How it sells cigarettes or why can only be answered at present in terms of theory. Perhaps one reason people smoke—especially the young experiencing puberty—is involved with some kind of self-destruct mechanism each of us carries around inside our heads. On the other hand, perhaps the ad is subliminally saying that Benson & Hedges is a challenge to cancer or the B&H has conquered or defeated cancer—the idea of a victory over something is certainly implied.

Anyway you look at it, the manipulative potentialities in the ad are alarming. Much worse, however—if this subliminal logic is reasonable—then the Surgeon General's warning "... That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health" is one

## The Filter Tip Medicine Show

of the most insidious marketing gimmicks ever developed by the tobacco industry, conning well-meaning government officials into believing they have protected the public.

### Our Very Own Medicine Show

The North American "medicine show" has been part of the culture for nearly two centuries. But today, the shows are expensively produced in national media where audiences often number in the tens of millions. One thing hasn't changed, however: the manipulative patent-medicine pitch and the gullible, always hopeful audiences seeking panaceas to their aches and pains along with eternal virility, fertility, and youth. Most patent medicines are psychogenics, designed to reduce essentially self-induced symptoms. They cure nothing. On television newscasts, the worse the bad news on any given night, the more patent medicines (good news) will be sold.

What could be more reasonable—even thoughtful—than the newscast sponsor offering a cheap quick remedy for your headaches, upset stomachs, plugged-up bowels, etc.? Marshall McLuhan wrote, "It takes an awful lot of bad news to sell all that advertising good news." Indeed, but it also serves to compete for a multibillion-dollar annual market. At least a billion dollars is spent annually in the United States on drug marketing. It is impossible to know the exact amount. Intense pressure is exerted upon every citizen to resolve his emotional (psychogenic) problems with various medicinals, pharmaceuticals, remedies, drugs, or any of the other labels used to describe these extremely profitable products. These drugs still closely compare with the magic potions of medieval magic described by what today are children's fables.

Americans are taught from infancy that any discomfort, anxiety, or systemic irregularity can be handled, for a small price, by some chemical or another. The perpetuation of the mechanical-man mythology conditions the culture for a broad series of self-perspectives. A child grows up to distrust and detest the inconsistencies in his bodily functions. Both consciously and unconsciously, he is taught to view his body as a mechanism of plumbing, wiring, valves, solenoids, gears, and cams. Irregularities cannot be tolerated from machines.

## Who Sells Science?

One fascinating question North American medicine should carefully probe is whether the drug commercials were developed from our so-called science or vice versa. The endless, often destructive, search for simplistic cause-and-effect relationships in medicine makes the physician an excellent consumer and distributor of pharmaceutical products. The pharmaceutical industry gives U.S. physicians a most careful and expensive lifelong training in product consumption.

The patent-medicine mass consumer drugs, the most visible form of drug merchandising, use essentially the same subliminal media technology as the alcohol and tobacco industries.

However, the most expensive and complex merchandising in America is applied to so-called ethical drug products, which can be purchased only by prescription. The 322,228 physicians in the United States constitute a rich and exclusive market whom the drug companies tenaciously and skillfully pursue. One physician, if properly courted, may write hundreds of prescriptions weekly for a single expensive drug.

As a specialized market, physicians are so valuable that Time magazine has a special edition that reaches only physicians. Time sold its 110,000 physician readers at \$2,825 for one four-color advertising page in their 1970 rate book. Ads aimed exclusively at physicians will not appear in other circulations. Time openly advertises their selective advertising to physicians as well as schoolteachers, students, and many other occupational groups. (It would be interesting to study these specialized editions to see if news content had been added or deleted in support of the advertisements. Much of Time's news material originates in corporate public relations offices.)

It is not generally known that several large consumer research corporations offer—at a price—prescription as well as consumer drug audits. It is boring, but most profitable research. Consumer audits are also done for food and other commodities by such as the giant international A.C. Neilson Co. and Audits and Surveys, Inc. They periodically audit the sale of competitive products in samples of supermarkets and drugstores throughout America. Ad executives can then match brand and product movement against media expenditures. Many pharmaceutical houses operate their own market

## The Filter Tip Medicine Show

research and retail audit surveys despite the high cost. This type of information is vital to an efficient advertising and marketing operation.

The ethical drug products market, however, is more difficult and expensive to monitor. Specialized market research corporations audit prescriptions in drugstores. Field interviewers periodically visit drugstores and collect data from prescription forms. Almost anywhere in the United States, every prescription written by a physician is available to any pharmaceutical company able to pay the price. Virtually all are subscribers. Drugstore owners receive small fees for making the prescription forms available.

### The High-Priced Pitchmen

Doctors are sold drugs directly by detail men: very highly paid, well-educated, and articulate salesmen who periodically visit every physician in the nation. Many detail men have had university medical training. A few physicians refuse to even see these soft-sell hucksters. But most have been educated to view their detail men as a service—a source of quick, effortless, often useful information on what is new and available. These detail men provide physicians with stacks of free samples that are usually passed out to less affluent patients. There are also occasional small gifts or gratuities made by detail men to their marketing targets at Christmas or on birthdays, but care is always taken that physicians will never feel they are being bribed. One of these detail men used to complain about how difficult it was to buy birthday presents for doctors, as the present had to be expensive yet appear inexpensive.

Many physicians openly admit they depend very much upon their detail men. Several described close friendly relationships with detail men of over twenty-five years' duration. These salesmen were often considered family friends.

Friendships are perhaps important between physicians and the men who service their information needs, but in the case of drug merchandising the detail men receive a periodic report on just how profitable the friendship has been for their companies. Prescription audits are a remarkably effective feedback device to assess the human relationship.

All this is usually invisible to the individual physician who—like all marketing targets—must be managed with the Illusion that he is a man who decides for himself. In addition to their management of physicians' information, drug companies bombard physicians through a whole spectrum of trade publications published under the pretense of being professional information.

Every physician throws out at least twenty-five pounds of monthly periodical literature especially designed to manipulate his decisions about drug preparations. These include medical association magazines (county, state, and national versions), elaborate graphic art productions, and a deluge of medical-related publications.

Most, including the AMA journals, are supported primarily by pharmaceutical advertising. Some medical publications obtain varying percentages of their costs from subscriptions, annual fees, etc., but for their survival, most depend largely upon drug advertising. Once again, this does not necessarily mean that these publications' editors permit the drug industry to make individual decisions for them. Nevertheless, whether the editor works for the AMA Journal or The New York Times, he is likely to think most carefully before jeopardizing a profitable relationship with an advertiser and certainly would be careful about offending an industry.

### The Subliminal Ethic

To sell ethical drugs to physicians via advertising in these journals, all the subliminal techniques discussed in this book are used—sex and death symbolism, embeds, and the like.

One of the more intriguing examples appeared in a Canadian Medical Association publication. Manufactured by the Wampole Pharmaceutical Company, Magnolax is not a prescription laxative even though it is marketed as an ethical drug among physicians (see Figure 43).

Physicians are invariably hard-pressed for time and deluged with far more reading material than they can possibly assimilate. Reviewing journals, they generally thumb through and perhaps check the index, but more often just casually survey the illustrations. The abundant drug advertisement pic-

## The Filter Tip Medicine Show

tures are, of course, the most interesting illustrations. This is another case of intentional perceptual overload. The Magnolax advertisement was shown to fifteen physicians along with a half dozen other similar ethical-product advertisements. Each physician looked at each ad for at least thirty seconds and was afterward asked to comment upon anything he had perceived that elicited an emotional response. Most made the usual comments about a nude young girl in one ad. Several commented upon patients they were treating with some of the advertised products. But no one made any comment about the Magnolax ad.

Look carefully at this ad before reading further.

When queried specifically, no physician seemed to have any negative or particularly positive feeling about the ad. None considered it either humorous or sad. Apparently all they perceived was a happy family, older parents with a young child off on a cruise, most likely heading for the tropics during the winter. The physicians were clearly missing—at least at the conscious level—what the ad agency's artist and photographer had struggled to incorporate into the illustration.

If you had read the copy and headline, you were advised at the conscious level that the child, Paul, and his grandparents have the same problem. The precise nature of the problem might seem to be constipation, though this fact is never stated in the copy. Magnolax is a laxative. None of the physicians seemed to make a story or logic out of the ad at the conscious level. If they perceived the artist's concept at all, it had to be subliminally. The ad includes embedded SEXes lightly etched into the surface. The subliminal sexualization of a laxative has intriguing implications. But there is more.

If you observe carefully, the three models have strained gestures and appearances. (It might help to block off the other figures so you can study one at a time. By taking each out of context, the message becomes more consciously apparent.) The gray-haired, rather handsome man in the sweater is bending slightly as he holds the boy. As he looks out at the horizon, even though he is smiling, he is straining hard. The smiling grandmother, as evidenced by her clenched

hands, is trying even harder. She is more bent over than her husband. But their smiles are brave.

Paul's expression is perhaps the most revealing. Though he is pointing at something, no one is looking. The grandmother and grandfather are looking in opposite directions, preoccupied by their individual efforts. Perhaps Paul knows the answer, but his grandparents are not paying attention. Paul's tight fist on the railing and his sitting, hunched-over posture clearly reveal how very, very hard he is trying. Apparently, none of the three are making the grade—pathetic victims of constipation, America's most feared affliction.

The ship's light, to the woman's right, is turned on, but none of the three have as yet "seen the light." The vertical post in the railing under the light leads the reader's eye down to the solution in the bottle—Magnolax.

The brand's only advertising had been in journals and by direct mail to physicians. Virtually all the plethora of non-prescription laxatives are very similar, differing mainly in price. Magnolax was quite expensive—and according to an Ontario drug consumer survey, the laxative most often recommended by Ontario physicians at the time. The ads must have worked.

If these techniques were limited to only nonprescription laxatives, the problem could perhaps be ignored. But virtually all drugs marketed through physicians include these techniques, as is easily confirmed by even a casual glance at ads of the medical periodicals.

### The Ideal Consumer

Some evidence suggests that physicians could be more susceptible to subliminal manipulation than those in other occupations. Our medical people have been exhaustively trained in linear, compartmentalized, cause-and-effect types of reasoning. Individuals with highly creative, artistic, or innovative abilities have great difficulty even getting into medical schools. Defining a desirable physician in the way we do, we eliminate almost entirely from the medical profession personalities or intelligence types who do not fit the model. Typical American physicians tend to be entrepreneurial, highly com-

## The Filter Tip Medicine Show

petitive, verbally dependent in their reality orientations, quite similar to engineers.

This is no accident. Their rigorous training, or brainwashing, produces people for whom two plus two must always equal four. Psychologist George Gordon at the University of London, England, discovered there were marked individual differences in susceptibility to subliminal stimuli. Test subjects drawn from the university's Fine Arts Department appeared far more sensitive (able to consciously perceive stimuli intended to be only subliminally perceived) than subjects from the science and engineering departments. The phenomenon has been documented by numerous researchers. At least in terms of those rigid qualities frequently labeled as "scientific" in America, physicians as a group would easily classify as "super-rrigids," highly susceptible to subliminal manipulation.

Again, it is most unsettling to find that the so-called "scientific" perceptual abilities of physicians can be so easily appropriated. And many physicians—one of the most prestigious of all high-credibility information sources—unknowingly transmit their subliminally programmed views on drugs to everyone they meet.

Which cigarette brand does your doctor smoke?

# All the News That Sells

The way back to reality is to destroy our perception of it, to do violence to our conventional habits of thinking, and, by an act of imagination and heart, reverse the ordinary workings of the intellect.

HENRI BERGSON  
An Introduction to Metaphysics

## The Voice of Freedom

The Eight Canons of Journalism adopted many years ago by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (see Appendix B) outline an idealistic code of professional conduct for the nation's editorial desks. The code is a noble and inspiring document, which elaborately defines the journalist's role as teacher and interpreter in the people's interest

Social Responsibility, expressed in its most inspiring metaphor, is cited as, the fundamental obligation of the press. Responsibility, Freedom of the Press, Independence, Sincerity (Truthfulness and Accuracy), Impartiality, Fair Play, and Decency—these seven canons of American journalism constitute, perhaps, the most eloquent collection of inspirational verbiage since the Sermon on the Mount. In the various ethical codes used by the press or its related entities—the American Public Relations Association. Marketing Association,

Advertising Association, and countless smaller trade and professional organizations—no mention is made about the profit-and-loss criteria upon which so many editorial and broadcast decisions are actually based.

One might well wonder why it was necessary for newspapers and other media to so strongly emphasize ethical codes of behavior. So many ethical codes in one industry might even suggest a widespread sense of guilt. The code, nevertheless, is a superb testimony to what could be or, perhaps, once was. All the industry really need do is simply follow it.

A great to-do is made about how editors work in the public interest, making careful decisions on what goes into print or into the wastebasket. Attempts to study this "gatekeeping" function have generally failed. Editors make their decisions on highly subjective, mostly unconscious criteria. Attempts to explain the process have usually ended as pious rationalizations about how editors serve their readers, but the ways they serve their advertisers are never mentioned. American journals loudly proclaim their belief in "freedom of the press." But in the interest of advertising profit, they are quite shy about examining the actual use of that freedom. For example, the recent shameless behavior of newspapers scrambling for fat cigarette advertising accounts—up for grabs after the Surgeon General forced tobacco off TV channels—should reasonably have brought publishers' motives into question by their writers as well as their readers. This, decidedly, was not the case. Any suggestion that the government extend its cigarette advertising ban to the press was countered with passionate denunciations via both editorial and news columns.

This rationale was presumably quite popular with the cigarette companies, who now purchase much larger quantities of newspaper advertising space, as well as with the newspaper stockholders whose dividends fattened due to heavy feeding from the tobacco industry whom they have proven themselves worthy to represent. This endorsement of cigarette advertising was advocated by an embarrassing majority of newspapers in North America. Surprisingly, few letters to the editor appeared in rebuttal to the absurdity that cigarette advertising

had anything to do with press freedom. Readers apparently accepted the argument

### Perceptual Defenses in News

Many individual journalists appear to believe—and their perceptual defense may have led them to believe—that advertising really does not sell anything and is a losing proposition for advertisers, most of whom are buying ads out of habit

Ask most any journalist about the profit structure under which his publication operates. He will attempt to convince you—often with deeply felt sincerity—that his paper barely survives from day to day through the generosity of wealthy patrons, or through the kindness of grateful readers.

Circulation income, the amount paid for a newspaper copy, is usually a loss to publishers—at best, a break-even overhead proposition. In the words of The New York Times marketing director, C. C. Guthrie, "circulation income barely covers the cost of paper and ink."

But mass media are one of the most profitable investments in American society. As members of the FCC have publicly observed many times, issuing a television or radio license is like giving a broadcaster his very own high-speed money machine. Newspapers or magazines can be even more profitable. Sam Newhouse, who owns a very successful newspaper chain, once said, "Anybody who loses money on a daily newspaper has to be crazy." Well-operated newspapers, especially those in monopoly situations, return well over 20 percent in profits before taxes. Few businesses reach even 18 percent, and 10 to 13 percent is considered successful.

In 1970 daily newspapers produced roughly \$7 billion in business, twice the television figure. Newspapers were the tenth largest employer in the United States, with 350,000 salaried employees, and the fifth largest United States industry in gross income. Projected growth during the 1970s was 6.2 percent per year.

An average daily in a monopoly situation in a 200,000 population city, with a 55,000 circulation producing a \$5 million annual income in 1968, earned a profit of 28.6 percent before taxes—nearly 14 percent after taxes. (During 1968

the average profit margin for American industry was 5.8 percent.)

When the Canadian chain publisher Roy Thompson bought twelve papers in 1967, he paid roughly \$200 per reader. Readers, like viewers, are bought and sold like cattle. Local advertising expenditures are increasing more rapidly than national, and daily newspapers derive the greatest advantage from this increase. In 1970 local and classified ads produced 82 percent of average ad revenues, compared with 18 percent from national advertisers in daily newspapers.

In North America it is virtually impossible for any publication to survive without advertisers. Reader subscriptions and per-copy payments simply cannot support any substantial publishing effort. The only way a publication can survive is through advertising or by selling a sponsor's products, which results in an integration between editorial decisions and marketing strategies.

Advertising predicates its effectiveness upon the high-credibility source with which readers will associate the ad. Remember the old saying, if you want to con someone you must first gain his confidence and respect. Newspapers are the highest credibility source among all media. In a recent national survey, over three quarters of American adults believed newspapers were the most truthful of all media. Since advertising effectiveness directly relates to this credibility factor, newspapers can still claim—in spite of high costs per thousand exposures compared with television or national magazines—a very high level of sales effectiveness. Newspapers are administratively divided into advertising and editorial departments—if possible, housed on separate floors. To maintain itself as a high-credibility source, the image any newspaper must project demands that advertising and editorial functions are separate aspects of publishing. Every newspaper has its hallowed myths of how various editors fought to maintain integrity against advertiser attempts to influence editorial policy. Indeed, these anecdotes are often quite true. If the editor did not defend himself against advertisers' overt attempts to influence editorial material, the publication might lose its public image of integrity. As far as advertisers are concerned, this high-credibility

source image is the most vital illusion within the mass communication industry.

### High-Credibility Paper

Newspapers, much like television, are low-definition mediurns. Illustrations are photographed through coarse engraving screens. It might appear strange why newspapers have continued to use rough newsprint when a smoother, finished paper could easily be substituted at a negligible increase in cost. Rough newsprint texture, however, communicates with the reader's unconscious every bit as much as do printed words and pictures. The coarse, heavy texture communicates an image of integrity, a rugged tactility, even an unsophisticated simplicity.

Appearances aside, newsprint is not utilized as a low-cost form of communication, though this is certainly the meaning communicated to readers. According to the image communicated, the publisher is saving the reader money by using cheap paper. This is, of course, unsupportable logic. If the advertisers could be better served by higher-grade paper, the publication would have to supply it.

IBM recently experimented with newsprint as a substitute for the more expensively finished paper used in computer output printing. Substantial savings could have been realized by thousands of IBM computer customers around the world if the less costly paper were substituted. IBM customers, however, simply couldn't believe what they read printed on newsprint. For computer printouts, newsprint was a low-credibility medium.

Credibility is the name of the game, not price. Ad effectiveness is substantially higher on rough newsprint than it would be if higher-quality, smoother-surfaced finishes were used. Newspapers, hoping to increase advertising lineage, continually experiment with other paper surfaces, always returning to the familiar, rough, cheap, and honest-appearing newsprint.

The modern North American newspaper is comprised of roughly 70 percent advertising and 30 percent editorial content. The ratio might vary plus or minus 10 percent, but a

newspaper with less than 60 percent of its total column inches in advertising is probably losing money.

Of the 30 percent of total newspaper editorial space, roughly one third (10 percent) is usually devoted to feature material—astrology tables, advice columns, funny pages, syndicated features, cartoons, editorials, letters to the editor, cheesecake, feature photos, and the like.

Another 10 percent appears to be news, but is in reality misinformation with highly specific motives. Usually originating in public relations or publicity offices, this information can usually be identified by careful reading, as it represents a specific point of view. Public relations or publicity material originates in government, industry, commercial organizations, book publishers, play and motion-picture producers, publicity offices of a thousand varieties—anyone who has an idea, person or product to sell. Publicity-oriented copy has become a mainstay of American journalism. This so-called news is free to editors, publishers, or broadcasters. Written by skilled, professional journalists—often exclusively for a particular publication—this promotional copy is a boon for the publishers and editors with their constantly rising overhead, but a boondoggle for the reader.

As an example, a book publisher who can obtain a review in Time magazine alone—read by over 25 million individuals—will likely sell thousands of copies even if the review is negative. If it is a good review, the book could sell tens of thousands and it will probably also be reviewed by Newsweek, The New York Times, U.S. News & World Report, and dozens of other newspapers and magazines.

### The Value of a Plant

Some years ago, a "planter" was employed by a major aircraft manufacturer to obtain national magazine publicity for an airplane then being sold to the air force. After eight months of work, a four-page story appeared in Look magazine featuring the airplane. The week following publication of the story, the company's common stock increased fifteen dollars per share. This type of planting is, of course, done continuously by government agencies and large corporations. To illustrate image manipulation, some years ago Northrop

Aircraft Corporation commissioned an accomplished artist to execute an oil portrait of their Snark self-guided missile for newspaper and magazine publicity. There was even a discussion of using the portrait the following year on a company calendar that would be sent to congressmen, government officials, and stockholders.

After several dozen hours of work, the artist came up with a large, magnificent portrait of the graceful Snark speeding high above the earth at dusk. Only minutes away on the horizon, barely visible, were the faint, flickering lights of a city—apparently the missile's target.

The Snark's only real function, of course, was to deliver the warhead on a one-megaton H-bomb. Yet several Northrop vice-presidents were horrified by the painting. Meetings were quietly but immediately scheduled in Northrop executive offices. The public relations director was ordered to diplomatically talk the artist into painting out the city. The Snark had to be publicly perceived as purely a technical and engineering problem with its phallic thrust symbolically related to flight and man's pursuit of freedom. The Snark was a mythological animal described in the book *Alice In Wonderland*. Publications which printed the picture took their readers on a fantasy trip not at all unlike that taken by Alice.

Newspapers survive as advertising media through their ability to saturate a local community. They aim at a generalized audience, usually biased toward the upper-middle class who primarily support department store, supermarket, and the preponderance of retail merchandising efforts. These readers would have little patience for an overly negative local perspective. Unless then-ego needs are massaged, advertisements will not have a maximal sales effectiveness. This paradox of American media, ignoring legitimate though unpleasant news information, has been well documented by writers like Robert Cirino in *Don't Blame the People*, Edith Efron in *The News Twisters*, and Mark Lane's *Citizen's Dissent* about which several major media executives commented publicly, "We will bury that book with silence." Cirino and Efron's books also received the silent treatment.

Mark Lane's first book, *Rush to Judgment*, a bestseller, received 450 reviews. His second, *Citizen's Dissent*, which strongly criticized newspapers' money-milking the assassina-

tion of President John Kennedy for all it was worth (and then some), received four reviews. Somehow, the book disappeared after publication and is difficult to find even in public libraries. Numerous other books critical of the news media have received similar treatment. These books would have caused the news media financial discomfort and dented their high-credibility-source images.

### Who Reads What-and Why?

One curious aspect of newspaper readers—long known, but usually ignored with a few easy rationalizations—is who reads what in a newspaper. Tests on news content, given a short time after reading in the normal reading environment when subjects were not aware they were to be tested, revealed that only a small proportion of readers or viewers consciously recall any substantial amount of news information that had just perceived—quite often with great inaccuracy on factual details. Hundreds of people, none of whom knew they were going to be tested, viewed a newscast on TV. Over 80 percent could not recall anything of factual substance they had viewed. These individuals were regular or chronic TV news watchers, ritualistically viewing one or more newscasts at least three times each week.

Millions and millions of people view television news, read newspapers and magazines, and yet appear to know very little about what was reported. Perceptual overload is purposely designed into news media. The assumption has always been that people read in order to learn about the world. But if few readers consciously recall even the general outlines of what they have read, what, then, is the news consumer receiving from the product?

### Prejudice Reinforced

Newspaper readership studies reveal that very few readers read everything in a newspaper. They may linger momentarily on a headline, story lead, picture, or advertisement. Even if readers do consciously read specific content, few are able to recall the items when they finally put the paper aside. What is most often recalled is information supporting readers'

established images, predispositions, or prejudices about themselves and their world.

The distinction between editorial and advertising content made by readers is not at all clearly divided. According to popular myth, readers presumably close their minds to advertising. The industry would have us believe that editorial content, on the other hand, is true and can be believed without qualification. Studies revealed that believable or not, advertising content is the most widely and frequently read and recalled content in news publications. Advertisements, though possibly not news in the purist definition of the term, do inform us on many aspects of our lives.

Advertising's 70 percent of a newspaper's total space is all good news. Advertising, together with at least 28 percent of editorial material—or 98 percent of most North American newspapers—tells the readers at the unconscious, attitude-formation level what they want to bear. From readership studies, this information appears far more engrossing to the average American than do the complexities of the EEC, the Vietnam War, or starvation in remote places like Biafra or Bangladesh. Advertisements, say what one will about their preposterous lies, exaggerations, and flatteries, are all good news which educates us to the world about us—not, perhaps, as it actually is, but as we wish it could be.

Some years ago, a group of concerned citizens descended upon Denver's tabloid Rocky Mountain News to persuade the managing editor to print more information about international affairs. The editor then showed the group his latest Schwerin Report, an analysis that evaluated the percentages of readers who read each ad and each story.

At the time, the Rocky Mountain News was running a boxed, two-column section on an inside page called "International Roundup" where brief one-paragraph capsules of major world events were reviewed. "Look," he explained, "when we include an international affairs piece, readership drops for the entire page and the facing page—not merely for the single story."

On the average day, newspapers publish much less than 5 percent of total available information from wire services, syndicates, special writers, reporters, public relations handouts, etc. The editor's job is primarily selection, an endless sorting

of copy to find items to entertain and hold advertisers' desired markets. What has been edited out or discarded in a newspaper often comprises a significant insight into what was really happening in the world.

### Subliminal News in Ads

It would be a waste of time to review the endless pages of retail ads published daily in newspapers. Most of the subliminal embeds shown in this and my earlier book appeared in newspapers. For those readers who still doubt the main preoccupation of the press, one typical newspaper ad should suffice. Towers Department Stores are a nationwide Canadian retailing operation concentrated in suburban shopping centers, Towers' advertising concentrates, as most retail stores do, in the daily papers. Ads were designed in a Montreal art department and distributed on reproduction marts to store managers throughout the nation. These particular ads appeared in the Wednesday, February 9, 1972, edition of the London, Ontario Free Press (see Figure 44) and in newspapers across Canada.

The artist-photographer who made up the ads posed a wholesome-appearing young model in comparatively inexpensive clothing. Not much here at first glance to become excited about. The three figures in the ad were posed by the same model and pasted together into a single layout. The subliminal illusion suggests the "Three Graces" or, possibly, three identities available to any woman who purchased the clothes. But did you notice the genital symbolism? An erect penis was subtly drawn on the end of the purse (see Figure 45). And the seated model's right thumb and forefinger curve together symbolizing the female genitals. The retouch artist purposely permitted the model's right hand to include six fingers, creating subliminal dissonance which draws unconscious attention to the genital symbolism.

Posed before archetypal heart symbols, which for many centuries have symbolized both love and the female genitals, the model's body language is one of display, of which her erogenous zones are the main points. The standing model's hands are posed so the fingers point at her genital area. In addition, a mosaic of SEXes has been embedded throughout

the display. Notice the patterns, especially on the standing model in the foreground. A brace of four subliminal SEXes covers the fly on her slacks.

Nor has the editorial content of newspapers and news magazines excluded subliminal stimuli. It is remarkable how journalists, with their claimed preoccupations over social responsibility, kept themselves from consciously perceiving what has been going on around them for years. In discussing subliminal perception with individuals from a wide range of occupations, the strongest disbelief has come from journalists—irrespective of the evidence presented.

Of course, there is no single individual to blame. Long-term use of subliminal devices is invisible to us largely because we do not want to believe our trusted institutions capable of such practices.

A. J. Liebling, an American journalist and humorist, once remarked, "The New York Times began as the staunch defender of the working man and ended up as the rich woman's shopping guide." Indeed, the Times—with its massive Sunday edition—publishes more advertising lineage per issue than any other newspaper in the nation. To the Times slogan of "All the News That's Fit to Print" might reasonably be added, "Which Supplies Our Advertisers With Their Primary Markets."

### It Pays to Know Your Reader

Typical of most major United States publications. The New York Times has studied and dissected their readership in a thousand ways through large-capacity computers, comparing it with their competition—the New York Daily News and New York Post. For example, 35 percent of Times readers own their own homes compared with 36 percent for the News and only 16 percent for the Post; 41 percent of Times reader families make over \$15,000 per year compared with 17 percent for the News and 36 percent for the Post; 53 percent of Times readers are college-educated compared with 16 percent for the News and 38 percent for the Post; 45 percent of Times readers are professionally or managerially employed compared with 23 percent for the News and 36 percent for the Post.

## All the News That Sells

Like the magazines, The New York Times knows precisely the cost per thousand for heavy gin drinkers, mutual fund purchasers, and the hundreds of other merchandising categories upon which any mass media must base its existence if it intends to compete for advertising lineage. The Times' research department can provide detailed information on their own and then: competitors' audiences in terms of geographic areas, children's ages, household size, family member occupations and employment, income, home ownership, membership in company boards of directors (a surprising 7.7 percent of employed readers), amounts spent weekly on food and groceries, car year, purchased new or used, air conditioning data, car rental experience, credit cards, life insurance, personal and household product purchases, securities owned, TV sets, vacations, and travel.

### The Marketing of Information

The front page of the Sunday, April 30, 1972, New York Times can be viewed as an advertisement for the newspaper. A number of elements contribute to the publication's image and what it promises the prospective reader as a rationalization for selling the advertisements (see Figure 46). If the top half of this page were selling cigarettes, fashions, or automobiles, it is doubtful if it could have been more effectively designed.

The classic type face on the masthead is small and simple, nothing ostentatious—as is the entire group of headline types used by the Times. With an image established over many years, the Times could not sustain this image if the type faces appeared lush or sensational. A comparison with the Daily News—a very noisy tabloid designed for advertisers attempting to reach the lower socioeconomic reader—quickly reveals these two publications are essentially noncompetitive. There is a small overlap of circulation who read both, but the majority of readers are exclusive to each paper. The Times is read by upper-middle-class, generally well-educated families. Of a total 1.6 million Sunday Times circulation, roughly one third is distributed within New York City, one third outside the city but within one hundred miles, and one third throughout the nation. According to their own

## MEDIA SEXPLOITATION

marketing data, the Times was read in 11,333 cities and towns in the United States—the closest thing to a national newspaper in America. In California the Times sold 12,600 copies each Sunday." Weekday circulation averaged slightly over 1 million copies.

This front page offered a mosaic of verbally symbolic excitement to readers. The excitement, however, was respectable and restrained, a proper upper-middle-class view of the world.

The page's focal point was, of course, the United Press International photo of a helicopter leaving a battle area in Vietnam. The helicopter was American, suggesting dominance (possibly phallic) over the pathetic Vietnamese soldiers clinging desperately to the landing skids. The ARVN soldiers appeared frantic and terrified as they tried to escape the combat zone.

Strangely, this combat photo also appeared during the same week in the Soviet Union's *Pravda*, telling the Soviet reader how cruelly the American imperialists treated their hapless Vietnamese allies who were often left to die while the Americans fled. Either meaning could be true—entirely depending upon which frame of reference readers were predisposed to follow. The photo told the Times reader, at least at the unconscious level, what he wanted to hear about himself. His self-image as an American would have been reinforced whether he favored or opposed the Vietnamese conflict.

To make certain the photo's sales value was increased to maximum, a mosaic of subliminal SEXes had been either double-exposed into the negative or drawn into the engraving plates (see Figure 47). The technique does, indeed, sell the news—which sells the advertising which sells the products.

The Times merchandising of news is successful. Net income during 1971 was \$9.5 million, even though down from \$13.7 million the preceding year. This was from a total 1971 revenue of \$291 million, up from \$283 million during 1970. This is very big business by any standard, involving twenty-five corporate subsidiaries and affiliates including book and magazine publishing, newspapers in Elorida and Paris, broadcasting stations—AM, FM, and TV—paper companies, microfilm, news services, and educational materials publishing.

## All the News That Sells

The time has certainly arrived, however, when someone should ask the Times what all this merchandising does to the quality of information, facts, and descriptions of reality. Even though these pages and the pictures are viewed for only seconds, they will be perceived and registered in the readers' unconsciouses, forming an attitudinal frame through which they perceive both themselves and the world about them. The sexualization of war is hardly a worthy activity, even if the end result is increased ad lineage.

American society has always been taught to assume through its educational system that a proliferation of media also means freedom of the press. Anyone is free to publish any kind of periodical they wish—if they can afford the financial costs of publishing, that is. But unless what is published sells, publication overhead does a job of censorship far more effective than any totalitarian government could impose.

It once appeared possible that many diverse views could coexist and compete for attention. But as greater numbers of publications appeared, there was actually a decrease in varied perspectives.

There exist today thousands of periodicals, but all they compete for are their readers\* money, advertising, and agency-preferred reader demographic strata. Magazines sell FIRST themselves, second their advertised products. And most are not at all inhibited about how they go about it. Slanting of news is simply a patronizing technique of reader massage that makes for effortless reading. Editors keep it sexy, brief, and chatty. They leave the bigger issues alone or handle them with gentle caution.

The reality is that United States commercial media are rarely utilized by anyone whose prejudices are likely to be mistreated or bruised. Individuals trained in self-indulgence, as Americans have been, will simply not attend to a medium that fails to tell them what they want to hear. "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest. . ." Fortune magazine, for example, is rarely looked at by readers of Ramparts—and vice versa. Berkeley Barb subscribers would find themselves most uncomfortable even in the company of someone who reads the Wall Street Journal.

## The Real Sonny and Cher

Television's Sonny and Cher were modestly talented entertainers propped up by ingenious television production, direction, and publicity machinery to represent the "ideal" American couple—if only they had not blown the whole fantasy with a messy divorce.

In late 1972 and early 1973 it was difficult to pick up a magazine anywhere in America without confronting Sonny and Cher. If all those pages had been sold as advertising, it would have cost the television networks who sponsored the promotion easily \$10 million. In a nation of 220 million people—some of them quite remarkable, some even newsworthy—what could explain the coincidence whereby dozens of highly paid editors suddenly decided to feature Sonny and Cher in lead articles?

This is known as the treatment. Pushed by a small army of network and sponsor publicity specialists, the couple were carefully engineered into the top United States print media. Publicity work today rarely involves direct payoffs to writers, editors, and publishers, but it does involve expensive planning and strategies, lavish luncheons, and invariably a long list of personal favors done by whoever has a product to publicize—in this case, Sonny and Cher—and the media who are buying for resale to their readers.

Over a five-month period (December 1972 through April 1973), three of the many publications who took part in the Sonny and Cher promotion were *Vogue* (December 1972), *Redbook* (February 1973), and *TV Star Parade* (April 1973). Each treated their Sonny and Cher feature as a cover story.

## Find Your Very Own Fantasy

*Vogue* readers are married (80 percent), average thirty to forty years old, rich (average annual income over \$25,000), and mostly college-educated. *Vogue* features advertised products with expensive price tags, jet set amusements, and a fantasy world of wealthy, indulged, pseudo-sophisticated pretty people who wear sexy clothes from exclusive stores such as Bonwit Teller and Peck & Peck.

## All the News That Sells

Redbook, on the other hand, is slated toward the young married homemakers with young children and modest middle-class incomes, some college or vocational school, and great insecurity over their identities, sexuality, and future. Ads feature prepared foods, book clubs, household appliances, furnishings, and children's merchandise.

TV Star Parade is designed for the grass-roots young American woman, both married and single, with up to high school education, a lower-middle income, and erotic fantasies about life among the celebrated. This reader thrives on celebrity romances with a touch of scandal, such as "The Night Elvis Waited for Ann-Margret." Ads involve self-improvement and bust development schemes, weight reducing, inexpensive wigs, and provocative attire from Fredericks of Hollywood. It is difficult to imagine readers of any one of these magazines encroaching upon the illusions of the other two.

This commercial fantasy manipulation of reality is clearly demonstrated in a comparison of the three treatments of what the respective readerships wanted to believe about Sonny and Cher.

Vogue's five-page picture series was titled "The Sexy Beat of Sonny and Cher." Photography was by Richard Avedon, one of the most celebrated and expensive fashion photographers in America. The brief article was written by Phyllis Lee Levin.

Tailoring to Vogue readers' emotional need in believe in upper-class fantasies, the first paragraph is worth repeating:

This year's love story is upbeat all the way. Its leads are two recruits from rockdom to establishment television. They compose ringing folk-rock songs, sing them and every other variety of song to the rafters, toss insults more often than bouquets at one another, and succeed in looking buoyant and loving every moment they are together. Sonny and Cher Bono—elegant clowns with appetites for the better extravagances of life such as a private plane with a French-speaking and cooking steward, such as a forty-room mansion piled onto five acres in Holmby Hills, California —have a philosophy about their work and a theory about their success. "There's an awful lot of cynicism everywhere

about marriage, so much that's negative. Well, we like to think we make being married a positive thing. There's this myth in America about romance ending the minute marriage begins. I think we're showing people something different. We're married, we're in love, we kid each other a lot, but we're still in love."

The young middle-class Redbook housewife's fantasies of Sonny and Cher were much different. The entertainers' images were changed and adapted to the publication's readers. In an article by Claire Safran titled "Sonny and Cher: Even When We Fight We Love," staunch middle-class values and sentimentalities prevailed:

The lady of the antique-filled, chandelier-festooned, 45-room house runs around it in blue jeans. When she wants to talk to her husband she bypasses the 17-century French drawing room, and they flop together in a string hammock stretched between two trees on the vast expanse of back lawn. When they dine with friends at Hollywood's chic Bistro restaurant she neither smokes nor drinks, but she beckons the maitre d' again and again for extra helpings of dessert—strawberries dipped in brown sugar. Her host explodes in laughter, "For heaven's sake," he says, "what we've saved on booze with you, we've spent on strawberries."

The piece is reader-oriented down to the last sentence. The lush description of "strawberries dipped in brown sugar" is fascinating when you consider the nine pages of food and dessert advertising in this issue of Redbook, also including an article and many ads on weight reducing.

### And, Finally...

TV Star Parade deeply probed the successful entertainers marriage in a cover story titled "Cher Tells Sonny About the Baby That Can Never Be His!" The story begins:

Sonny and Cher had been married five years when their daughter, Chastity, was born. They had almost given up hope of having children when Cher discovered she was

## All the News That Sells

pregnant, and they were both delirious with joy over the prospect of becoming parents.

Throughout the entire nine months Sonny went out of his way to pamper and protect Cher. He even lied to her about their financial situation. Sonny had invested more than a million dollars of their money in a film starring Cher entitled Chastity, and the results had been a disaster. They were broke. Cher was riding around in a Rolls-Royce while Sonny was borrowing money anywhere he could get a loan.

"I was really frightened," he admits now. "We were wiped out. I didn't know what we were going to do. But I couldn't tell Cher. It was Christmas. She was pregnant, I couldn't bear to worry her."

In the best tradition of TVSP and similar publications, anyone who makes it big must first have been a loser with whom the reader can identify. Notice how even the sentence length, syntax, and vocabulary of each article has been adapted to the reader's educational level. The sad and possibly tragic part of all this trite, reader-patronizing nonsense is that readers have been trained to uncritically seek out identification with their group's respective illusions and cling desperately to them. Knowledge of these hidden publishing motives and manipulative adaptations are either unknown or repressed by readers. These publications thus constitute a subliminal background to the value systems and culture of their readers.

Who, then, is the real Sonny and Cher?

## Psychological Inventions in Print

Time magazine is a complicated psychological invention difficult to analyze by itself, but by comparison with its major competitor, Newsweek, at least some of the intracacies of Time's emotional appeal become apparent. Time presents a dominant, aggressive view of the world. It is action-oriented, and its readers like to believe they are too. Upward mobility, as rapidly as possible, is one underlying, constantly repeated basic theme. Newsweek, on the other hand, is far more passive.

Newsweek readers have much less emotional need to see themselves in a dominant-aggressive role. They have other hang-ups—avoidance of conflict, passivity toward power is the belief that man's rational nature will always prevail and that there are answers (if we could only discover them) to all our problems. Both Time and Newsweek must reflect a strong national point of view, but Newsweek tends to present a more reflective version of world events.

Demographically—age, sex, income, education, etc.—it is extremely difficult to differentiate between the two magazines' readerships. In terms of psychographics, or psychological predispositions or attitudes, however, each publication has staked out an almost exclusive circulation, each of which perceives itself in a distinctive way.

### Saving "Time"

In a media study some years ago, it was discovered that Time readers saved the publication—behavior that could be described as highly anal. Throughout North America, Time readers' basements and closets are stacked to the ceiling with old issues. If you have subscribed for three years, very likely you will have over 150 copies stored about the house.

When asked why they kept these old issues, Time readers almost unanimously responded that they wanted to be able to look up events, people, and situations. But almost no one had ever actually located a reference in the old copies.

Many, nevertheless, had tried. You can spend an absorbing afternoon, day, week, or even month going through old issues of Time—ostensibly looking for an item you believe you have read. One hardly ever finds his specific item. But many readers, in the study, found deep satisfaction in a nostalgic Time review as they went over a lot of other things.

Of course, should readers really want to look up an event in Time, a periodical index, available in any library, would direct them to the specific issue. None of these Time readers, however, had a periodical index in their homes. Few had used such an index, even in libraries.

Curiously, Newsweek readers did not accumulate such large quantities of back issues. Could Time readers have a special need to save time? Could the publication preserve, is

verbal formaldehyde, the events of yesterday as Time readers need to remember them, in a ritual affirmation of their dominant, nationalistic, aggressive view of the world? Time's editorial style and techniques assure advertisers of a premium audience both able and willing to purchase advertised products. The Time presents is highly readable, dramatic, and oversimplified to the point of absurdity, presenting a unique American view of the world. Time language presents a rigid authoritarian identification between news personalities and their functions. This technique is not unusual in American journalism, but is carried to an extreme in Time. By using what philosopher Herbert Marcuse described as the inflectional genitive or possessive, people are made to appear as integral properties of their place, occupation, company, or activity. Time introduces the reader to "Minnesota's Hubert Humphrey," "Jordan's Hussein," "Apollo 16's Command Module Pilot Ken Mattingly." A person thus becomes owned, possessed, or identified with a thing, rather than the other way around. The hyphenated attributive construction also contributes to rigidity of meaning and classification: "Literature's heavy-handed, light-haired, problem-child Norman Mailer announced last week..." The author, his field of work, his emotional and physical features, as well as a critical—strongly negative—reference to his age, were homogenized into a single verbal structure emphasizing compound adjectives which imprint and harden Mailer's simplified-negative image upon the reader's mind.

The Time syntactical structure poses little room for reader qualification or thoughtful evaluation. There is no invitation to reflect upon the fairness, accuracy, and honesty of the sentence's meaning.

Another type of abridgement or condensation used heavily by Time, though also by other publications, is the alphabet soup of collective initials—SEATO, WHO, AFL-CIO, NATO, AEC, DAR, even USSR. The abbreviations can be useful time and space savers in print, but often expand subliminally from mere abbreviations into a superb technique of inclusion-exclusion manipulation. UN, for example, nicely evades meaningful emphasis upon the concept united. NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, silently avoids any reference Greece and Turkey. SEATO, Southeast Asia Treaty

## MEDIA EXPLOITATION

Organization, gently excludes reference to those countries that are not members or who oppose the organization. AEC dissolves the Atomic Energy Commission inconspicuously into the anonymity of hundreds of alphabetically abbreviated government agencies. These abbreviated meanings are, of course, static, fixed concepts and very often inaccurate and simplistic.

The language of images forms a barrier to the development of concepts by identifying things and people with functions, rather than distinguishing things and people from conceptualizations. In the image simplifications used by Time and other news publications, thinking is unnecessary—critical thinking circumvented entirely by stereotyped stimuli, stereotyped thought and stereotyped reaction. Knowledge and an understanding of dynamic conceptual transition in realities and meanings have been sabotaged, transforming falsehood into truth.

The hyphenated compounding of images is another aspect of the famed Time style—"brush-browed" Edward Teller, the "father of the H-bomb," "bull-shouldered missileman von Braun," "science-military dinner," and the "nuclear-powered, ballistic-missile-firing" submarine.

These integrated images project a complete absence of contradiction, disharmony, or alternate point of view. It's no accident that this syntax frequently appears in metaphors uniting technology, politics, and the military into an impregnable holy trinity.

The technique is also strengthened through the use of personalized familiarity. The reader's kitchen table, living room, friends, jobs, etc., are intimately related to the reader as is "your president," "your schools," "your favorite restaurant," "your rights," etc. The world is presented patronizingly especially for you.

### Worth a Thousand Words?

Time has learned much from its sister publications which more heavily depend upon picture stories to sustain their massive circulations. Aside from the linguistic techniques of verbal style and typography affecting the unconscious, the photographic essays utilize every possible subliminal trick.

## All the News That Sells

The Vietnam battle montage is typical (see Figure 48). The five pictures included were selected from several hundred possibilities, possibly several thousand, considering the extensive resources of Time-Life. Life photographers are famous for shooting hundreds of pictures in order to obtain a half dozen for actual publication. The caption reads:

(Clockwise) Gear-laden young ARVN smokes on rubble-strewn street; tank rolls up for defense of Dong Ha; bodies of Viet Cong soldiers lie on roadside; worried civilians head south for safety in jam-packed bus; ARVN artillerymen fire 155-mm howitzer at advancing units of North Vietnamese army.

Other minor interpretation variations were possible, of course, but—at the consciously perceived level, in logical, reasonable terms—this would seem to be what the photo page was overtly all about.

The Time caption pointed out the obvious. Reader tests on the pages containing the caption and photograph suggested that fewer than one reader in ten would scan the caption. But Time editors certainly understand how a picture page is read. Experiments with the McNaughten and pnpilometer cameras have shown that the fovea moves in a saccade from point to point in response to symbolic content. Symbols involving the two polarities of love and death will pull the eye irresistibly toward a specific point in a scene or picture. Design elements - lines of movement or attention within a photograph—also play a part in directing the fovea. The first object on the Vietnam montage to attract the eye is the picture of death in the upper right-hand corner. If you close your eyes for a moment, then open them suddenly, as they momentarily focus you will probably find yourself looking at the dead body. Roughly 60 percent of a test audience perceived the body as a primary focal point. About 40 percent began with the mother's face, then moved upward to the body. A photograph of a nude Playboy bunny might strongly compete for primary focal point with the dead North Vietnamese, but it is doubtful that sex could win. Death appears to have a much stronger symbolic hold on the human psyche.

Focal point saccade paths—though unconsciously motivated—are highly predictable within a culture.

From the body, the eye saccades along the bloodstained earth to the second focal point—the tank and pigs. The pig facing right will saccade the fovea into the photograph of mother and child.

From the mother and child, the test subjects divided. About half followed the line of the mothers' eyes diagonally down into the soldier's photo at the bottom left, then to the right from the breech of the howitzer to the second man with his fingers in his ears, then back up to the dead body again, and the sequence was repeated.

The other half of the test subjects moved from the mother's hand on the panel down into the howitzer picture, then to the soldier at the bottom left, and then upward at an angle set by the slung carbine—again reaching the body, where the sequence was repeated.

The picture editor's objective was to keep the reader's eye moving about the montage as long as possible so a mosaic of picture concepts would be unconsciously perceived. Instead of the linear meaning in the caption sequence provided by Time, consider what the actual meaning of this montage involves.

Meaning is derived from the sequence of microsecond stops compulsively made by the fovea in its saccades—the totality has been described as a "mosaic" or "montage" or "aggregate of visual stimuli." The sequence of the mosaic is all important. Change the sequence of fovea saccades, and the meaning changes, even though the individual picture content remains the same.

### The Good Guys or the Bad?

The primary focal point on the Time montage is the upper right photograph of two dead soldiers, presumably North Vietnamese, though it is impossible to tell from the uniforms. However, the bodies have been on the ground for some time—the blood has soaked into the earth. If the dead soldiers were South Vietnamese (our side), the bodies would have been removed and the mess cleaned up as soon as possible. The torn paper and debris suggest the bodies have been

## All the News That Sells

searched or looted—certainly not a pleasant set of alternatives for the secure Time reader.

The box behind the body in the foreground has archetypal symbolic significance. A box has traditionally symbolized a maternal influence, possibly establishing a relationship between the bodies and the mother in the picture below. The box also symbolizes unexpected destructive potentialities, as in Pandora's box.

The tank, the second picture perceived by most readers, shows the tank commander giving orders as he p the powerful machine—the turret cannon appearing as a phallic extension of his genital area. From the subliminal fantasy projected by the layout, it is entirely possible the deaths to the right were a direct result of the tank's destructive power.

The editor's inclusion of the two pigs is intriguing, as they could easily have been cropped from the photograph. The pig is an ancient symbol of impure desires and of the amoral plunge into corruption. (Recall the discussion of pig symbolism in *The Exorcist* chapter.)

At the time of this issue's publication, Time was undergoing an antiwar swing in its editorial policy—one that changed frequently, but remained consistently parallel to the fluctuating currents of reader opinion.

The third focal point in the montage is the mother and child—possibly a modern-day Vietnamese version of the Madonna. Specifically, the reader's fovea will move from the mother's nose to her right ear, then across to the child's face before taking one of two different paths.

The mother's facial expression would have many levels of meaning in both the reader's conscious and unconscious. Her face is old, more than just merely old as calculated by years. Her expression includes fear, but not as a dominant emotion. One detail likely to remain repressed in the reader's unconscious is the discrepancy between the lines in her face, the very young child, and the absence of gray in her hair. She is, apparently, a young woman—prematurely aged by war, clinging in silent desperation to her bewildered child. Both she and her child are attempting to comfort and support one another, but the mother's face expresses the ageless plight of the refugee.

Few of the 25 million readers made conscious interpretations of these five photographs as their eyes quickly scanned the montage. Nevertheless, considering the delicate sensitivity to even the smallest detail in human perceptual equipment, these interpretations, or something reasonably close to them, did occur within the unconscious of almost everyone who perceived this page for even an instant.

Conscious meanings appear to only reinforce and confirm underlying subliminal predispositions. Whether or not you were opposed to the Vietnam War, most probably you would interpret the page of photographs in support of your predispositions. If you were neutral, however, the display might move you into opposition. Conscious perceptions are often merely accommodations to the unconscious basic program.

The Vietnamese soldier, standing with his phallic carbine pointing at the ground, symbolizes defeat. The soldier appears to be a very young boy. The open-mouthed expression, as he carries his heavy load through the garbage-strewn roadway, suggests someone not terribly bright—certainly not a strong, shrewd, battle-hardened combat soldier. Several dozen test subjects, reviewing the montage, were asked whether the soldier was going toward or away from battle. Almost unanimously they responded "away," many adding, "and in a hurry."

The two artillerymen tending their howitzer, the final picture in the fovea saccade, portrays the soldiers as relaxed, casual, and almost indifferent as they observe an explosion, presumably caused by their weapon, which has been retouched into the photograph's horizon. The Vietnamese soldiers do not appear threatened or even involved in the war in spite of their helmets (whose chin straps are not in place) and flack jackets. The gun placement, exposed on a hilltop, with its inept camouflage and casual gun crew, subliminally communicates incompetence or indifference.

Test subjects were given three alternatives as to what was going on in the howitzer photograph—attack, retreat, or sustaining position. Again, unanimously, they responded with sustaining position. In other words, the war is going nowhere. The soldier with fingers in his ears is certainly symbolic of un-involvement—or as the archetypal concept is often expressed, "He hears no evil!"

At the time of publication this view was consistent with the opinion of large segments of United States public opinion. The media, especially the big, national, at-full media, follow public opinion. They rarely, if ever, lead, nor could they without jeopardizing their high-credibility positions. To make certain the five pictures have maximum impact upon the 25 million readers (especially at the unconscious level, where Time would establish itself as the ultimate authority on the war), their retouch artists have covered the Vietnam photo montage with embedded subliminal SEX triggers to deeply relate the content into the reader's psyche (see Figure 49). Some of the SEXes have been left unmarked so the reader can experiment with discovering Time's real opinion of "The Big Test—Vietnamization: A Policy Under the Gun," as the cover story was called.

These visual representations of war unquestionably sell Time, which sells ads, which sell merchandise. But, what is the effect of this symbolic subliminal enrichment? What are the effects of sexualizing war and death? Were reader perspectives toward the entire Vietnam affair conditioned, manipulated, and managed by these techniques as a side effect of merchandising the news? Various autocratic governments have schemed relentlessly to control the power of the press. Hitler's Nazi party succeeded in total thought control in less than a decade through careful direction of mass media. It has taken American advertising agencies a little longer. American society may, indeed, be approaching a point where freedom from the press will become as vital an issue as freedom of the press. Free access to information may be central to the survival of democratic institutions. An unrestrained, responsive, and responsible information media is an absolute necessity for this type of society—media which, incidentally, appear to be rapidly vanishing. Information media must serve - as forthrightly as possible—the citizen's interests, not merely those of advertisers and corporate investors. As recent events have eloquently demonstrated, what is good for investors is not necessarily good for the nation.

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# Even the Killings Are Funny

It is just as important to the capitalist mass producer as to the Soviet functionary to condition people into uniform, unresisting subjects. . . . We ostensibly free, Western, civilized people are no longer conscious of the extent to which we are being manipulated by the commercial decisions of the mass producers.

KONRAD LORENZ  
Civilized Man's Eight Deadly Sins

## Culture Is Not Accidental

One of the most significant discoveries in the studies that led to this book was that culture—especially the dynamic American culture—is today a manufactured product. And, media are the factories. By creating a vast materialistic technology, humans created the illusion they could control their environments. This illusion made them even more vulnerable to forces and influences involving the unconscious.

Knowledge of man's ability to deceive himself through perceptual illusions would, to say the least, be highly embarrassing when focused upon treasured concepts of free will

## Even the Killings are Funny

omniscience, national or cultural superiority, God-given prerogatives, etc.—all those fantasies that reinforce Western civilization's ego needs. Perhaps the reason why no culture in history has ever been continuous lies in our ego-driven inability to believe that we cannot be influenced by what we cannot consciously perceive. It is not difficult to conclude that man has done a superb job of conspiring unconsciously against finding out about himself.

It would be quite simple if the good and bad guys were clearly defined in this issue of mass manipulation. Our solution would be simple if we could legislate the advertising agencies out of business or, perhaps, execute or imprison their executives as societies have often done to those who embarrass their own systems. Sacrificial scapegoats would be a simple answer. But the problem is just not that simple.

Skilled media technicians, including those in advertising, are doing precisely what they have been trained to do by their society, according to the society's own rules of business and commerce. Further, they are doing it extremely well. All of us have benefitted from incredible levels of self-indulgence in comparison with most of the world's peoples. Many of these "benefits" are directly attributable to mass merchandising. We have, in a very real sense, sold out our individualism and freedom in return for a handful of baubles while we play-acted at being free individuals.

There is one basic and very unsettling aspect to the perceptual illusions presented in this book. The artists, writers, and composers really hid nothing from us. The obscene and taboo embeds were always clearly there for us to consciously perceive had we wanted to. Indeed, we did perceive all of them unconsciously. Whenever I have shown these apparently hidden details to lecture or reading audiences, most (over 95 percent) have consciously perceived them instantly. We had hidden the obscene details from ourselves.

Many labels attempt to describe the phenomena of hiding perceptions from oneself—repression, denial, or some of the other perceptual defenses. But the fact remains that all of us prevent ourselves from consciously dealing with what is going on around us. We are, simply, party to the manipulation—and a willing party. We benefit, of course, from the deceptions. This is the hardest pill of all to swallow.

## MEDIA SEXPLORATION

One simple fact about human behavior—known for many centuries—is that no one can possibly con, manipulate, or lie to anyone unless that person is willing to go along with the game. As a nation and culture, America is every bit as responsible for these deceptions as are the advertising and media executives who deceive us.

### The Media-Dependent Society

The British Broadcasting Corporation recently made a study of television viewers' ability to live without television for an entire year. One hundred eighty-four families were paid roughly thirteen dollars weekly not to use their sets. This was a fairly good sum of money at the time in England—certainly a worthwhile bonus for any working-class family.

Families began dropping out of the study almost immediately. No one lasted beyond five months. The researchers unanimously agreed their volunteers had "suffered withdrawal symptoms similar to those of drug addicts and alcoholics." There was total agreement among a professional panel selected to evaluate the study that in the future there would be "increased dependence upon television among the general population, and that television minimized self-reliance, social contacts, and creative pursuits among its audiences."

The BBC study was a replication of similar research performed a year earlier in Germany. In the German study the first volunteer dropped out after three weeks. Similarly, no one lasted beyond the fifth month.

We can now discuss media dependence as a valid psycho-neurotic syndrome, perhaps even a meaningful personality characteristic. Americans, not to mention other technologically advanced peoples, should no longer ignore and take for granted their media-managed environment if they hope to survive as human beings.

Obesity, for one example, is dramatically apparent in America. Visitors from less well fed areas of the world are often astonished at the large numbers of fat individuals within the United States. The National Council on Health recently announced that 60 percent of the United States population was overweight. North America has more per capita obesity than any nation in the world. Obesity, of course, leads

## Even the Killings are Funny

to a great many serious systemic diseases and disorders, but the relationship between media and obesity has never been publicly examined. Advertisers discovered long ago that TV sports programs, for example, were superb platforms upon which to merchandise food and beverages. The oral gratification compulsion within each human is quite easy to stimulate in a context of action, suspense, and uncertainty. TV sports provides an illusion of participation by the viewer that, of course, is only a fantasy. A well-trained TV sports addict will consume several thousand calories during an afternoon or evening of baseball, football, and hockey. Even the reruns, and the reruns of the reruns, appear to sell nearly as well as the originals though audiences become progressively smaller. Consider also the game shows, soap operas, and dramatic programs where food and beverage sponsorship is heavy, and how the program content integrates with the commercials.

The roughly two hundred hours average viewing endured monthly by the some 50 million American families is permeated with strong subliminal stimuli which hypnotically program individuals for compulsive acts. Virtually no one is exempt, though some are more responsive to the stimuli than others. TV ads are reinforced by radio, newspapers, magazines, and billboards—the so-called media mix or integration now worked out for large advertisers by highly sophisticated computers which can assemble a strategy for the most efficient expenditure of marketing money.

Earlier in history, national and regional cultures were the painful evolutionary product of centuries. Changes were slow and uncertain until advanced media technology entered the picture. Now consumers in one culture are pretty much the same as those in others, though illusions of uniqueness may persist. Brand names may be different, but the programmed response and value system are identical. Changes in self-image, hero myth, death orientation, etc., occur most rapidly in the service of commercial objectives. When a newly introduced cultural entity no longer serves an objective, it is quickly scrapped or modified into another form.

All this, of course, may be doing great and shattering destruction to individual psyches whose basic value systems are remanipulated every few years and sometimes every few months. One fourteen-year-old boy hung himself in Calgary,

Canada, during 1974 while attempting to imitate a mock hanging performed on television by rock music star Alice Cooper. A coroner's jury investigating the death called once again for "definite and immediate steps to ban these programs of violence." Predictably, however, nothing changed.

Strangely, Americans appear consciously convinced they are the world's most peaceful, nonviolent society. This is a superb example of the repression mechanism operating on a societal level. Dr. McLuhan would call it narcissus narcosis. No one has, as yet, done anything to reduce violence—except, perhaps, to hire more police, which often has the effect of creating more violence. Further, no one is likely to do anything about violence except to sponsor more of the endless investigations or studies that only serve either to appease the public conscience or confuse the issue.

The answer to violence in America is really quite simple: Americans have developed violence into one of the world's most profitable enterprises—from war (defense) to athletics (spectator sports). Violence is a merchandising staple for every mass communication media in America—every bit as virulent as sex, perhaps even more so. Sex and violence, in fact, go well together in movies, television, music, etc.

### Big Money in Death

Attitudes toward death and killing in America are intriguing, and over the past decade or so have changed substantially. The fantasy of death portrayed in movies and television is now often described as "humorous" or "funny," especially by young people. The bloody, sadistic slaughter, without which few movie or TV producers could obtain financing, is a formidable fantasy which keeps audiences buying tickets and tuning in. The next time you witness a movie death, execution, or massacre, listen carefully. You will hear portions of the audience laugh and giggle as the blood spurts, heads roll, or bodies contort.

Hero myths, very important as part of the maturation process, have changed drastically over the past few decades. Traditional hero figures from Beowulf to El Cid to Galahad to the Lone Ranger to Davy Crockett to John Wayne—the archetypal heroes who challenged and inspired the young

## Even the Killings are Funny

with noble and ideal values—would be perceived by today's young as camp, fake, unreal, and ridiculous. Contemporary hero myths among the young feature such characters as Alice Cooper and David Bowie—perverse, degenerate caricatures of the ancient heros, who profitably glory in their contempt for traditional values.

Through their media, societies perpetuate the mythologies that serve their basic goals. Nietzsche once described history as the lie through which nations survive. He may have been correct, in that certain kinds of lies or illusions are necessary to individual and national survival. It is doubtful that anyone ever really believed John Wayne was as brave as his endless accession of roles portrayed him. In any respect, the hero-image projected for the young in search of an ideal - even though pure fantasy—reflected individuality, honor, integrity, and manhood.

It may be important to remember that media does not ever present reality. The fantasy-entertainment death or violence on film has no relationship at all to real-life death or violence. Real death is very complicated. It even has its own very distinctive odor. Where the realities of death are carefully concealed, deodorized, romanticized, and hygienized, media's fantasy of death becomes the symbolic reality at the unconscious level.

In a recent NBC-TV news program about juvenile crime, John Chancellor interviewed several teen-aged murderers. Ono, about to be released from a New York City juvenile detention center, casually admitted to fifteen or sixteen murders—most of which occurred during muggings. The boy was asked, "What did you feel during and after the killings?"

"Nothing," he replied in a matter-of-fact tone. "Nothing? Even when they lay on the ground bleeding and gasping," the interviewer questioned.

"No, nothing. Nothing, really! It was like watching a TV play or a movie. It wasn't real."

At present North Americans want to deal only with the superficial symptoms of their social cancer, not with the actual disease and the sources of infection. Probing too deeply into the commercially motivated and controlled madnesses of our time might be a devastating experience for the national ego.

It would be folly to suggest that government control and operation of media could ever be a simple, practical answer. Noncommercial information systems operated by dictatorships appear quite as capable of transporting the world's peoples into the Brave New World or 1984 as effectively as commercially motivated systems.

### Laws Can Tranquilize

The Canadian Radio Television Commission, similar to the FCC in the United States, recently amended their regulations to forbid the use of "any advertising material that makes use of any subliminal device." Like the FCC, the CRTC is pathetically ineffectual in its attempts to manage the broadcasting industry in the public interest. North American media are controlled by a handful of powerful advertising agencies whose single dedication, preoccupation, and obsession is selling. Executives courageous enough to advocate changes that interfere with short-term profit goals are few and far between.

Similar attempts to ban subliminal stimuli were made by the British in their Broadcast Code, by Belgium in a 1972 law, and by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in a report to their Secretary-General on October 7, 1974. A United Nations task force discovered it was technically possible to broadcast subliminal content internationally via satellite. It is even technically feasible for anyone with the equipment to infiltrate a satellite broadcast signal with subliminal stimuli. Their report stated it was possible to modify or even eliminate cultures through subliminal reprogramming of the unconscious, and strongly recommended that all member nations pass rigorous laws prohibiting such techniques, especially when the media crossed national or cultural frontiers.

Attempts to legislate the unconscious perceptual system could serve a good purpose by bringing the issue into public awareness. However, North American news media ignored the significance of the CRTC regulation, the various laws, and the United Nations study. If the subject was discussed at all, it was done superficially with tongue in cheek, or twisted into a nonsense story usually quoting some behaviorist psychologist that there was no such thing as the "unconscious."

## Even the Killings are Funny

The UN study failed to mention that subliminal techniques are already in wide international use by American advertising agencies.

Print and broadcast media, of course, have a vital interest in pretending the subliminal issue is a farce. Business institutions in general have a similar investment to protect. Should North American audiences begin to carefully examine advertising and news manipulation, it would be like opening Pandora's box.

If there is an answer, it will not be in a simplistic attempt at legislation, though drug, alcohol, and tobacco merchandising might be legislatively banned from public communication media due to the epidemic proportions of the problem they create and sustain. The control of public information by commercial interests must cease. But this is much easier said than done. If changes in media are to occur, they will probably emanate from far more basic changes in the society. A corrupt media merely reflects a corrupt society.

## Education for Consumption

Analytical media studies in both universities and high schools are currently considered subversive by many school administrators who patronize business and media. Business and advertising groups have successfully pressured educational institutions into offering only an endless succession of vocational media courses that only describe the obvious and sustain what society wishes to believe is going on. Moral and intellectual cowardice is difficult to rationalize when encountered among University officials. Much like The Who's Tommy, students are told not to perceive consciously meanings that might upset their parents and the society.

Perceptual education has never been attempted on a large scale in America. Most educational efforts appear to have a primary objective in conformity, uniformity, and intellectual predictability. So much of the incredible potential in life that should be available to young Americans remains hidden from view, ignored, suppressed or, more damagingly, repressed. The manipulative culture teaches Americans to pretend or play at nonconformity while they conform like mass-produced robots—most of whom find their places in consumer

demographic or psychographic categorization, moving from work to stores to television to bed with occasional interruptions for food and beverage consumption, infrequently interrupted by sex.

## The Con Man and the Conned

So much of the social and political nightmare that has continued in America this past decade had its roots deep in the widespread acceptance of lying, manipulating, and misrepresenting reality as a preferred and rewarded mode of behavior. For many decades, American media have venerated the con man and his endless games—games that all require the sucker to trust before he is taken.

Jonathan Schell, in his chilling book, *The Time of Illusion*, documented the tragic record of lies, misrepresentations, image manipulations, and covert strategies which continued throughout the Nixon and earlier presidential administrations. With exhaustive factual documentation, Schell probed the near destruction of democratic government by the now disgraced President's small army of advertising-public relations experts who—with the help of media—flim-flammed America with self-flattering illusions of reality.

Nixon and his staff simply used communication technology that is a normal everyday tool of both business and government in the United States. The technology of deceit has been developed more highly in America than ever before in Western civilization.

The con man is one of the most cherished of our cultural stereotypes—Sergeant Bilko, Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, Man at the Top, The Hucksters, The Flim Flam Man, O'Henry heroes, W. C. Fields characterizations, etc. American literature is loaded with sly heroes who trick the unsuspecting mark, usually someone of power and wealth. The tradition goes back even to Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man*. But modern Robin Hoods, when examined carefully, usually turn out to be stealing from the poor and giving to the rich—instead of the other way around.

At this point in history, however, it appears useless to blame any individual for what has occurred in American media. Driven by relentless pressures for continually increas-

## Even the Killings are Funny

ing profits, media and its advertisers have simply maximized the returns on their capital investments. Most would not have anticipated the casualty rate or would not have permitted themselves to even consider such a possibility.

After six years of media study, resulting in two books on subliminal perception, this author searched his data exhaustively for some redeeming quality, some constructive potential, some hope for human betterment and survival within North America's system of commercial mass media. Nothing surfaced that appeared even vaguely optimistic.

North America appears, at the moment, trapped in a rapidly accelerating spiral toward self-annihilation. Out of control, motivated by avaricious self-indulgence and sustained by repressed blindness toward reality, human survival probabilities decrease each day. There is strong evidence that news information involves a similar repression to that of the advertisements. Even educational data appears repressed - if it does not serve our ego needs or self-flattering illusions.

It is simply not, at present, in the interest of media to sponsor significant social-economic-behavioral change. And as long as profit or economic survival is the major preoccupation of public information sources, meaningful chnge will be most unlikely.

## In Closing

From the research for this and my earlier book, Subliminal Seduction, developed two highly disturbing insights.

First, that such subliminal technology—certainly neither new nor unknown in Western civilization—had been so elev erly and exhaustively adapted to mass merchandising.

Second, and vastly more significant, was the slow realization that Americans—as a nation—apparently do not wish to deal with the issue of their manipulation by their media. Much like the proverbial ostrich, both heads and intellects appear deeply buried in the sands of self-indulgence. This is a sad commentary on a nation which has sacrificed so much on the altar of human freedom.

Even though these explorations in communication have suggested a different perspective toward the human condition than that currently in vogue within American educational

and governmental institutions, the promise of utilizing subliminal techniques in the public interest is substantial. For example, both theory and experimental evidence suggest that some forms of addictive behavior may yield to subliminal therapies. If subs can channel some individuals into addiction—as appears to be the case—they should also work in the opposite direction. We will never know until someone tries.

The educational potential in utilizing subliminal stimuli are enormous, even though students would have to be clearly informed of the techniques before they were applied. If entire populations can be subliminally taught the complex behavior, decision making, and value systems which support high-level consumption, they can unquestionably be subliminally educated in other areas of life.

Indeed, it would appear the techniques of production and communication now in use (even though perhaps often for the wrong ends) could make of our world virtually anything we desire—a place of happiness, fulfillment, and meaningful relationships. On the other hand, we can just as easily turn our world into an island of despair, which we may have already done, where fear, alienation, distrust, avarice, and senseless indulgences dominate our existence and waste our life spans.

Both these alternatives are clear and immediately available.

---

# Epilogue

The vital question today is not whether there will be life after death, but whether there was life before death.

MARSHALL MCLUHAN  
Understanding Media

## Appendix A

### BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER\*

When you're weary, feeling small,  
When tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all;  
I'm on your side. When times get rough  
And friends just can't be found,  
hike a bridge over troubled water  
I wilt lay me down.  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down.

When you're down and out,  
When you're on the street,  
When evening falls so hard  
I will comfort you.  
I'll take your part.  
When darkness comes  
And pain is all around,  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down.  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down.

Sail on silvergirl,  
Sail on by.  
Your time has come to shine.  
AH your dreams are on their way.  
See how they shine.  
If you need a friend  
I'm sailing right behind.  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will ease your mind.  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will ease your mind.

\* © 1969 Paul Simon. Used with the permission of the publisher.  
218

## Appendix B

### THE CANONS OF JOURNALISM

This widely known and important code, the Canons of Journalism, was adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

The primary function of newspapers is to communicate to the human race what its members do, feel, and think. Journalism, therefore, demands of its practitioners the widest range of intelligence, of knowledge, and of experience, as well as natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning. To its opportunities as a chronicle are indissolubly linked its obligations as teacher and interpreter.

To the end of finding some means of codifying sound practice and just aspirations of American journalism, these canons are set forth:

#### I

**Responsibility.** The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but consideration of public welfare. The use a newspaper makes of the share of public attention it gains serves to determine its sense of responsibility, which it shares with every member of its staff. A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust.

#### II

**Freedom of the Press.** Freedom of the press is to be guarded us a vital right of mankind. It is the unquestionable right to

## MEDIA EXPLOITATION

discuss whatever is not explicitly forbidden by law, including the wisdom of any restrictive statute.

### III

Independence. Freedom from all obligations except that of fidelity to the public interest is vital.

1. Promotion of any private interest contrary to the general welfare, for whatever reason, is not compatible with honest journalism. So-called news communications from private sources should not be published without public notice of their source or else substantiation of their claims to value as news, both in form and substance.
2. Partisanship in editorial comment which knowingly departs from the truth does violence to the best spirit of American journalism; in the news columns it is subversive of a fundamental principle of the profession.

### IV

Sincerity, Truthfulness, Accuracy. Good faith with the reader is the foundation of all journalism worthy of the name.

1. By every consideration of good faith a newspaper is constrained to be truthful. It is not to be excused for lack of thoroughness or accuracy within its control or failure to obtain command of these essential qualities.
2. Headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles which they surmount.

### V

Impartiality. Sound practice makes clear distinction between news reports and expressions or opinions. News reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind.

1. This rule does not apply to so-called special articles unmis-

## Appendix B

takably devoted to advocacy or characterized by a signature authorizing the writer's own conclusions and interpretation.

### VI

Fair Play. A newspaper should not publish unofficial charges contesting reputation or moral character without opportunity given to the accused to be heard: right practice demands the giving of such opportunity in such cases of serious accusation outside judicial proceedings.

1. A newspaper should not invade private rights or feelings without sure warrant of public right as distinguished from public curiosity.
2. It is the privilege, as it is the duty, of a newspaper to make prompt and complete correction of its own serious mistakes of fact or opinion, whatever their origin.

### VII

Decency. A newspaper cannot escape conviction of insincerity if, while professing high moral purposes, it supplies incentives to base conduct such as are to be found in details of crime and vice, publication of which is not demonstrably for the general good. Lacking authority to enforce its canons, the journalism here represented can but express the hope that deliberate pandering to vicious instincts will encounter effective public disapproval or yield to the influence of a preponderant professional condemnation.

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Wilson Bryan Key received his Ph.D. at the University of Denver and has since served as Professor of Journalism at four different universities. The author of the widely-hailed Subliminal Seduction, Dr. Key is currently president of Media-probe: Center for the Study of Media, Inc. He lives in Southern California.

SIGNET•451•J6148•\$1.95

# SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION

ARE YOU  
BEING SEXUALLY  
AROUSED  
BY THIS PICTURE?



HERE ARE THE SECRET WAYS AD MEN AROUSE YOUR  
DESIRSES—TO SELL THEIR PRODUCTS.

BY WILSON BRYAN KEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY MARSHALL McLUHAN AND  
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- THE GUTENBERG GALAXY: The Making of a Typographic Man** by Marshall McLuhan. An analysis of how the human organism has been remodeled by a single communications medium, becoming a full-scale interpretation of Western history. (#MW1225—\$1.50)
- UNDERSTANDING MEDIA** by Marshall McLuhan. A provocative, widely debated theory about how television and other present-day mass media are changing the cultural patterns of American life. (#MY1175—\$1.25)
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# SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION

Ad Media's Manipulation of a  
Not So Innocent America

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Wilson Bryan Key

  
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## Contents

<i>Media Ad-vice: An Introduction</i>	vii
1 The Mass Media's Illusion of Reality	1
2 The Language Within a Language	11
3 Perceptual Defenses Hide Meanings in the Service of Subliminal Manipulation	38
4 The Media Immersion—Baptism by Words and Pictures	73
5 It's What You Don't See That Sells You	89
6 Sex Is Alive and Embedded in Practically Everything	108
7 The Playboy Syndrome: Who's Playing with <i>Whom or What or Whose?</i>	118
8 The Castrating Cosmovogue	138
9 Video's Victimized Voyeur	156
10 The Man Who Almost Thought for Himself	171
11 The Avarice-Entrapped Media of <i>Mass Communication With Thanks</i>	186
REFERENCES	199
	201

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*All of my recommendations, therefore, can be reduced to this one: study the modes of the media, in order to hoick all assumptions out of the subliminal nonverbal realm for scrutiny and for prediction and control of human purposes.*

MARSHALL McLUHAN

*It may be impossible to resist instructions which are not consciously experienced. There seems to be a close parallel between these (subliminal) phenomena and those associated with post hypnotic suggestion and neurotic compulsive responses.*

N. F. DIXON

*The real catastrophe is the prospect of total moronization, dehumanization, and manipulation of man.*

HERBERT MARCUSE

## Media Ad-vice: An Introduction

by Marshall McLuhan,  
Director, Centre for Culture and Technology  
University of Toronto

Customer in antique shop: "What's new?"

Professor Key has helped to show how the deceits of subliminal advertising can be a means of revealing unexpected truth: the childlike faith of the ad agencies in four-letter words points to our obsession with infantile bathroom images as the chemical bond between commercial society and the universal archetypes.

The old journalism had aimed at objectivity by giving "both sides at once," as it were, the pro and con, the light and shade in full perspective. The "new journalism," on the other hand, eagerly seeks subjectivity and involvement in a resonant environment of events: Norman Mailer at the Chicago Convention, or Truman Capote writing *In Cold Blood*.

In the same way, the old history—as Michael Foucault explains in *The Archeology of Knowledge* (Pantheon Books, New York, 1972)—sought to show "how a single pattern is formed and preserved, how for so many different successive minds there is a single horizon." But now the problem of the "new history" is "no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits. It is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations...."

The study of advertising as contemporary cultural history, of history on the hop and in the hopper, of history as process rather than as a product, such is the investigation of Professor Key. Advertising is an environmental striptease for a world of abundance. But environments as such have a way

of being inaccessible to inspection. Environments by reason of their total character are mostly subliminal to ordinary experience. Indeed, the amount of any situation, private or social, verbal or geographic, that can be raised and held to the conscious level of attention is almost insignificant. Yet ads demand a lot of attention in our environmental lives. Ads are focal points for the entire range of twentieth-century knowledge, skills, and technologies. Psychologists and anthropologists toil for the agencies. So, Professor Key has drawn our attention to the use made in many ads of the highly developed arts of camouflage.

T.S. Eliot long ago pointed out that the camouflage function of "meaning" in a poem was like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the house-dog of the mind so that the poem could do its work. Professor Key explains that the proclaimed purpose of the ad may, at one level, be just such a decoy so that the ad may do its work at another level of consciousness.

### *Secrets Within Banality*

Today many people feel uneasy when serious attention is paid to objects and subjects that they are accustomed to classify as "trash." They feel that the base commercial operation of ads is beneath any claim to their awareness or analysis.

Such people, on the one hand, have little heeded the lessons of history and archaeology which reveal how the midden-heaps of the ages provide the wisdom and riches of the present. And yet, on the other hand, they know how their snobbish "freeze" (or surrender) in the presence of the horrid vulgarities of commerce is exactly what is needed to render them the cooperative puppets of ad manipulation. The ad as camouflage often uses the blatant appeal to hide more subtle and powerful motivations than appear on the surface.

Shakespeare's oft misquoted remark about "one touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin" really concerns the eagerness of men to swallow a flattering bait. He is not suggesting that natural beauty is a social bond!

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin:  
That all with one consent praise new-born gawds  
Though they are made and moulded of things past,

And give to dust that is a little gilt  
More laud than gilt o'erdusted.

Men are united only in their eagerness to be deceived by appearances.

The wise gods seal our eyes;  
In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us  
Adore our errors; laugh at us while we strut  
To our confusion

Thus part of the business of the ad is to seem frank, open, hearty, and direct. The business establishment long ago founded itself on ebullient attitudes of trust and confidence which were part of the discovery that "Honesty is the best policy" and "Crime doesn't pay." "Policy," of course, is the Machiavellian term for "deceit," so immediate and overt honesty can be camouflage for ultimate exploitation, in ads as in politics. However, we live today in the first age of the electric information environment, and there is now a sense in which we are the first generation that can say, "There is nothing old under the sun."

Since Sputnik (October 17, 1957), the planet Earth went inside a man-made environment and Nature yielded its ancient reign to Art and Ecology. Ecology was born with Sputnik, for in an electric information environment all events become clamorous and simultaneous. An old adage at IBM is: "Information overload equals pattern recognition." At instant speed the hidden becomes plain to see.

### *Minds Are Quicker Than Eyes*

Since the mind is very much faster than light (it can go to Mars and back in an instant, whereas light takes minutes), the hidden structure of many old things can now become apparent. With the new information surround, not only specialisms and monopolies of knowledge become less useful, but the world of the subliminal is greatly reduced. Whatever the practical uses and expediency of the subliminal may have been in the past, they are not as they were. Even the future is not what it used to be. For at electric speeds it is necessary to anticipate the future in order to live in the present, and vice versa.

Necessarily, the age of instant information prompts men

to new kinds of research and development. It is, above all, an age of investigation and of espionage. For in the total information environment, man the hunter and scanner of environments returns to supervise the inner as well as the outer worlds, and nothing is now unrelated or irrelevant.

T.S. Eliot has two statements that directly concern our new simultaneous world of "auditory" or "acoustic" space in which electric man now dwells on the "wired planet." The first passage is from his discussion of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," explaining that "the whole of literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order." It is the character of auditory space, which we make in the act of hearing, to be a sphere whose center is everywhere and whose margin is nowhere, for we hear from all directions at once.

In the magnetic city of the new electric environment we receive data from all directions simultaneously, and thus we exist in a world sphere of resonant information that is structured and which acts upon us in the auditory pattern. Eliot had regard to the role of the individual talent faced by this new kind of richness of tradition and experience. So it is not strange that our time should witness a revival of many forms of oral culture and group performance, any more than it is strange that we should see on all hands the awakening and cultivation of occult traditions, and new concern with inner life and visionary experience.

For these are resonant things hidden from the eye. The wide interest in every kind of structuralism in language and art and science is direct testimony to the new dominance of the nonvisual values of audile-tactile involvement and group participation. In fact, it could be said that there is very little in the new electric technology to sustain the visual values of civilized detachment and rational analysis.

Mr. Eliot's second statement on the world of the simultaneous concerns the "auditory imagination":

What I call "auditory imagination" is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word: sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the

ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated, and the trite, the current, and the new and the surprising, the most ancient and the most civilized mentality.

Eliot here speaks of the mind's ear, the subliminal depths and reach of the corporate tongue bridging countless generations and cultures in an eternal present. Eliot and Joyce accepted language as the great corporate medium that encodes and environs the countless dramas and transactions of man. Their raids on this vast inarticulate resource have made literary history on a massive scale.

Meantime the enormous new environment of advertising has sprung up as a service for the consumer who hardly knows what to think of his newly bought cars and swimming pools. It is well known to the frogmen of Madison Avenue that those who read or hear the ads are mostly those who have already bought one of the objects displayed. "Ask the man who owns one," or "You feel better satisfied when you use a well-known brand." The fact is that the ad world is a colossal *put-on* as much as the world of fashion or art or politics or entertainment. The stripper puts on her audience by taking off her clothes, and the poet puts on his public by stripping or dislocating the familiar rhythms and habits of expression.

How about the adman's rip-off? He must move on more than one level in order to obtain the interplay that involves the public. The poet lets us look at the world through the mask of his poem while wearing us as his mask: "hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère," said Baudelaire to his reader. The adman shows us the world through the mesh or mask of his product while playfully putting on our cash and credit as his own motley. But that there may be another level of reinforcement, the ads sometimes provide a barrage of optimistic innocence along with an undercurrent of guilty joys and fears upon which the blatant, gesticulating commercial rides piggyback. It is the quest of Professor Key to unconceal this hidden ground of the ad as figure, and to reveal the conflict between them.

### *Scuba Diving into Hidden Backgrounds*

It may be that the impulse of the admen to use the hidden ground of our lives in a furtive way in their ads is no mere surrender to base impulse and greed for power. By replaying

the hot glamorous images in a cool scatological pattern, the subliminal message becomes a dramatic irony of the superficial and conscious one.

The subliminal replay of the open appeal thus offers an offbeat jazz quality of quarter notes sourly commenting on the full notes, by way of a wry twist. It is the role Freud himself played as diver into the dirty unhygienic depth beneath the dewy Romantic sentiment. At the extreme point, Freud the diver got a signal: "Surface at once. Ship is sinking." When he came up for air he wrote about "Civilization and its Discontents." After a long session in the dark unconscious, Freud recognized the visual and literate world as the location of civilized values and awareness. The dark within is the world of tribal or acoustic man who resists civilization as do our dropouts. Professor Key brings out the struggle between these worlds as inherent in the very structure of the not-so-humble ads that provide the directives and the competitive taste patterns of our commerce and our entertainment.

Bugging and Sleuthing have become a universal business, like education. The electric age is the age of the hunter. It is the age of simultaneous information. The simultaneous ends the subliminal by making it as much a structural part of consciousness as former specialism or monopoly or secrecy. The age just behind us was the opposite of the electric age. The mechanical and industrial society was the age of steam and hardware and highway and monopoly and specialism. It was a visual world.

The age of the electrical and simultaneous is the age of environmental and ecological awareness. Structurally speaking, the simultaneous is acoustic rather than visual. We hear from all directions at once, and that is why the reign of the subliminal is ending. The subliminal or the hidden can be present to the hearing when it is not accessible to the eye.

It makes much sense when N. F. Dixon writes in *Subliminal Perception* that experienced psychologists of our sense lives have bypassed the subliminal and the auditory in favor of visual investigation. For the psychological, as much as for any other establishment, the commitments are to the preceding age of the visual. However, the new age is also subliminal to its predecessor. It is, therefore, easy to know that the eye may be solicited by lines it cannot see, and our judgments warped by motives that are not in consciousness nor in the habitual patterns of our nervous systems, "for

the whole environment is full of subliminal influences which experienced psychologists have systematically neglected."

It is only fair to add that the electric environment is man-made and new, and experienced psychologists, quite as much as the rest of the population, continue to adhere to the older and familiar and visually structured world of the hardware age in which they invested all they had. For the visual is the world of the continuous and the connected and the rational and the stable.

Since we have now put an electrical environment of resonant information around the old visual one, our daily adaptations and responses are at least as much to the new acoustic environment as to the old visual world. If one were to ask, "Which is the better world?" it would be necessary to explain that the values of an acoustical and musically oriented society are not those of the classically visual and civilized society.

### *Predictions of the Past*

For good or ill, we have phased ourselves out of the older visual society by our electric technology that is as instant as light. If we want to get back into a visually ordered world, we shall have to recreate the conditions of that world. Meantime we have a new environment of instant information that upsets and "pollutes" all the patterns of the old visual sequences. Nothing is "in concatenation accordingly" in the simultaneous world of sound. Effects now easily and naturally precede causes, and we can freely predict the past.

At the speed of light our space-time coexistence tends to give us the whimsical manners of the girl in Professor Butler's limerick:

There was a young lady named Bright  
Who moved with the quickness of light;  
She went out one day  
In a relative way,  
And returned the previous night.

At electric speed, the goals and objectives of the old sequential and visual world are irrelevant. Either they are attained before we start or we are out of date before we arrive. All forms of specialist training suffer especially. En-

gineers and doctors cannot graduate in time to be relevant to the innovations that occur during their training period.

Change itself becomes the only constant. We seem to live in a world of deceits and fake values where, for example, those engaged in news coverage are often more numerous than those making the news. But the creation of a total field of world information returns man to the state of the hunter, the hunter of data.

To the sleuth, to Sherlock Holmes, nothing is quite what it seems. He lives, like us, in two worlds at once, having small benefit of either. Caught between visual and acoustic worlds, physicist Werner Heisenberg enunciated the "Uncertainty Principle." You can never perform the same experiment twice. Heraclitus, living in the old acoustic world before Greek literacy, said, "You can't step in the same river twice." And today in the electric world we say, "You can't step in the same river," period.

In the Renaissance, when the old acoustic world of medieval and feudal order was quickly being overlaid by the visual order of the printed word, there was an epidemic concern about deceit and imposture. Machiavelli invented a new art of lying by stressing an extrovert mask of bluff, hearty sincerity. Iago tells us that he will wear his heart on his sleeve for daws to peck at. Othello demands "ocular proof" of his wife's infidelity, and is deceived by the same "proof." Shakespeare's great plays are devoted to the theme of the deceits of power. Hamlet is caught out of role. He is a medieval prince adapted to the medieval world of acoustic involvement and personal loyalty. His world of ideal musical harmony collapses into one of visual distraction and mere appearances:

Now see that noble and most sovereign reason  
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh

His dilemma is stated also by Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*:

Take but degree away, untune that string  
And, hark! what discord follows; each thing meets  
In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters  
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,  
And make a sop of all this solid globe.

### *Other Side of the Looking Glass*

The auditory man is an ecologist because he imagines everything affecting everything, because all happens at once as in a resonating sphere. The clash between the medieval ecologist and the Renaissance man of private aims and goals is playing in reverse today. The new technology is acoustic and total. The old establishment is visual and fragmentary. All this concerns Professor Key's study of the deceits of the admen.

These admen teams operate on the frontier between the worlds of eye and ear, of old and new. They are trying to have the best of both worlds by wearing both masks. Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's great contemporary, devoted much of his work to the presentation of the deceiver and the deceived, stressing the inherent appetite of most people to wallow in deceit as a delectable diet:

Still to be neat, still to be drest,  
As you were going to a feast;  
Still to be powdered, still perfumed  
Lady, it is to be presumed,  
Though art's hid causes are not found,  
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

This could be an anti-advertisement today if equal time were allowed to query the counsel of each ad. Saving the appearances mattered more and more during the Renaissance and after. Molière's *Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe* are built on the assumption that truth is a matching of inner state and outer behavior. The fact that truth is making not matching, process not product, can never satisfy the visual man with his mirror held up to nature.

By contrast, Walter Pater plunged his readers into the forbidden world of the unconscious when he presented them with the image of Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa." He sought the truth on the other side of the looking glass:

The presence that thus rose so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all 'the ends of the world are come,' and the eyelids are a little weary. . . . Set it for a moment

beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed?

(*The Renaissance*)

Pater is fascinated by his image of a sick "soul with all its maladies," spurning the slick white Greek goddesses of rationality. Pater has flipped, fashionably, out of the visual and back into the medieval acoustic world. "All art," he said, "constantly aspires toward the condition of music."

It is this music that began to be heard in the Romantic depths of the starved and rationalistic psyche of the visual cultures that reached from the Renaissance to the Victorian age. Pater's pen portrait of "Mona Lisa" continues in a plangent tone that might win the applause of any ad copywriter:

She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands.

This passage is a striking description of the Western subconscious with all its evocation of the occult and of delirious vices.

### *Subliminal Graffiti*

It is plain that the subconscious is a wicked witch's brew of superhuman interest for all boys and girls. This *Mona Lisa* affair raises a major aspect of Professor Key's study. Does the discovery of graffiti in the deodorants and aids to glamor threaten the public of consumers, or does it merely reveal the childish itch of the admen themselves? For example, the title *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* may be both immoral and immortal because it links hair and gold, faces and feces. For

gold and dung have always had affinities, even as the greatest perfumes include a subtle ingredient of excrement.

There is the further fetching factor of the author's name, Anita Loos. It doesn't suggest the prim Puritan altogether. Since the world of dung and excrement is quite near to the daily conscious level, are we to panic when the admen put these at the bottom of the big hamper of goodies that they proffer the affluent?

Will the graffiti hidden under the lush appeal expedite sales or merely impede the maturity quotient of the buyers? Will the graffiti lurking in the glamor crevices set up a resonant interval of revulsion against the consumer appeals, or will the confrontation of fur and feces in the ads merelyadden and deepen and mature the childish consumer world? It is a strange and tricky game to mount the sweet enticing figure on a rotten ground.

To use, on the other hand, four-letter words in the libretto of the siren's song may prove to be a metaphysical discovery. The poet W.B. Yeats meditated in anguish over the plight of man:

Love has pitched his mansion in  
The place of excrement;  
For nothing can be sole or whole  
That has not been rent.

He, too, is desperate over the appearances.

Just how precarious a boundary Yeats provides can be noted in his nervous betrayal in the ambiguous words "pitch" and "rent." "Pitch" is filth and "rent" is venal. In a word, the "Love" of Yeats can no more be trusted to present a clean slate than the overeager admen with their subliminal reinforcement of glamor by graffiti. The passionately embracing young man asks his partner, "Why speak of love at a time like this?" The remark serves as a corollary to the moan of Yeats. But it also opens up the *Playboy* world where girls are playmates.

### *The Playboy's Plaything*

Things have changed electrically since I published *The Mechanical Bride* in 1951. The assembly-line love goddess, abstract and austere and inhuman, has been succeeded by hula-hooping, mini-skirted, tribally anonymous jujubes. Ut-

terly embraceable, consumable, and expendable, they expect little, for they know that the fragile ego of the playboy cannot endure the threat of any strain or commitment.

Thanks to color photography, and then to color TV, the magnetic city has become a single erogenous zone. At every turn there is an immediate encounter with extremely erotic situations which exactly correspond to the media "coverage" of violence. "Bad news" has long been the hard core of the press, indispensable for the moving of the mass of "good news" which is advertising. These forms of sex and violence are complementary and inseparable. Just what would be the fate of wars and disasters without "coverage" could be considered a meaningless question, since the coverage itself is not only an increase of the violence but an incentive to the same.

The power-starved person can easily see himself getting top coverage if he is involved in a sufficiently outrageous act of hijacking or mayhem. The older pattern of success story by achievement simply takes too long to be practical at electric speeds. Why not make the news instead of a life?

The close relation between sex and violence, between good news and bad news, helps to explain the compulsion of the admen to dunk all their products in sex by erogenizing every contour of every bottle or cigarette. Having reached this happy state where the good news is fairly popping, the admen say, as it were: "Better add a bit of the bad news now to take the hex off all that bonanza stuff." Let's remind them that LOVE, replayed in reverse, is EVOL—transposing into EVIL and VILE. LIVE spells backward into EVIL, while EROS reverses into SORE. And, we should never forget the SIN in SINCERE or the CON in CONFIDENCE.

Let's tighten up the slack sentimentality of this goo with something gutsy and grim.

As Zeus said to Narcissus:  
"Watch yourself."

MARSHALL McLUHAN

## I. The Mass Media's Illusion of Reality

Subliminal perception is a subject that virtually no one wants to believe exists, and—if it does exist—they much less believe that it has any practical application.

Doubtless, it would be far more comfortable to simply ignore what is going on. After all, most North Americans benefit from what is probably the fattest nation on earth, blessed with riches beyond the wildest fantasies of the Pharaohs, the Caesars, or the Khans of ancient China. But—perhaps mainly because Americans are overfed, overweight, and overindulged in a world where many people go to bed hungry each night—they should know clearly what has been done to them subliminally, regardless of the pain or discomfort that may result. North Americans, perhaps not uniquely, find it quite difficult to be self-critical, especially when the criticism is directed at their standard of living and life-style, the so-called *American way of life*.

This story is about *subliminal perception* and about *the ways we think we think*. In the concept of subliminal phenomena are included all those techniques now known to the mass media by which tens of millions of humans are daily massaged and manipulated without their conscious awareness.

Every person reading this book has been victimized and manipulated by the use of subliminal stimuli directed into his unconscious mind by the mass merchandisers of media. The techniques are in widespread use by media, advertising and public relations agencies, industrial and commercial corporations, and by the Federal government itself.

The secret has been well kept. The average citizen, as well as most social and behavioral scientists, simply do not know what is going on. Further, and most shocking, they appear not to want to know what is going on. Any investigation of the techniques of subconscious communication involves first

an investigation into one's own fantasy systems, self-images, illusions, personal vanities, and secret motives. This is an investigation that might make even the toughest of us extremely uncomfortable. The inquiry, the readers will discover for themselves, can make calm, gentle, considerate individuals defensive, outraged, and aggressive.

### *Ecological Survival*

From another view, however, if what we have self-flatteringly called our civilization is to sustain itself beyond another quarter century, it is imperative that we find out in detail what has been happening both to us and to our world at this level of unawareness.

In thirty years the world's present population will double. In one hundred years it will quadruple. Moreover, no one living in an industrialized society today is more than a few minutes away from the warhead end of a missile armed with a hydrogen bomb or biological warfare agents. The missiles may already be obsolete. Nuclear bombs can now be manufactured by any nation in the world. The technology is still expensive, but very available. These bombs, it is widely known, can be delivered in a suitcase if necessary.

It is fascinating to wonder how long this world—starving and impoverished as it is—will tolerate the incredible self-indulgence which has come to be known as the American way of life. The United States government has indicated a willingness to sacrifice the entire population of the world, if necessary, to sustain this indulgence in the face of future inevitable international crises. Vastly increased numbers of people are a certainty—like the earth's orbit around the sun—not a theory. Desperate demands for the growing shortage of world resources are already apparent. An average North American during his life-span will consume 54 times more of the world's resources than will his East Indian counterpart. According to the recent Rockefeller population study, individual American consumption will double its present level within the next quarter century at the present rate of increase.

In a world such as this one, straining from population growth and resource depletion, the ability to differentiate between illusion and reality will soon become even greater a necessity to survival. It is entirely possible that the self-delusions of the world's industrialized nations have already ap-

proached a level where any abrupt return to reality would be catastrophic to their entire way of life. But this may be getting ahead of the story.

What we *consciously* perceive about ourselves and our worlds has, of course, much to do with our behavior. The subject has been virtually exhausted, however, or at least would appear to be well on its way to exhaustion. During the past decade dozens of excellent books dealing primarily with *cognitive* or *conscious* human experience have reached the best-seller lists. This book acknowledges the role of conscious perception, but it will concentrate upon *unconscious* perception—subliminal experiences which manipulate, manage, or control human behavior, but of which humans are consciously unaware. The entire subject of human subliminality is largely unknown, even though omnipresent in the behavioral environment.

*Subliminal Seduction*, in addition, does not presume to tell the reader what he should see or read in verbal or pictorial stimuli. This book is concerned only with content planted within media which readers or audiences are *not supposed to see or read*, at least at the conscious level.

### *Subliminal Hardsell*

Appearing in the July 5, 1971, edition of *Time* magazine, on the inside back cover, the Gilbey's London Dry Gin advertisement is a classic design of subliminal art (see Figure 1). Assuming the ad appeared in *Time's* World Edition, the inside back cover space would have cost \$68,450, plus another \$7,000 for art and production, bringing the total to roughly \$75,000. This ad could have involved 24.2 million readers, with a break-even 20-1 sales point of \$1.5 million, which would buy enough gin to float the proverbial battleship—or at least a small destroyer.

Over one thousand adult male and female test subjects were asked to look at the advertisement while relaxed. The subjects were not familiar with subliminal techniques. They were requested not to analyze content, but to just let feelings come to the surface as their eyes moved over the page. Feelings, of course, are nonverbal, but the subjects were asked to try and put whatever their feelings seemed to be into words—no matter how far out or absurd these words might appear to be. The ad was neither explained nor discussed

any further after these instructions. All possible precautions were taken to avoid pre-programming the test subjects.

Thirty-eight percent apparently saw nothing but a gin bottle and collins glass and were unable to verbalize any feelings they might have experienced. This does not mean, of course, they perceived nothing. They were consciously unaware of feelings, however, and unable to verbalize on the perception.

Sixty-two percent, on the other hand, described feelings of "satisfaction," "sensuousness," "sexuality," "romance," "stimulation," "arousal," and "excitement" and several young women reported "horny." None of the test subjects discovered any of the subliminal details in the advertisement. The subliminal technique used by Gilbey's remained invisible both during the evaluation and during a lengthy discussion afterward.

The advertisement was painted over a photograph and was published during the summer, promising the reader cool, refreshing pleasure in return for his purchase of Gilbey's. The bottle cap is removed, making the contents easily accessible to the reader. This, at least, is the obvious, consciously transmitted message coming from the frosty bottle, ice cubes, and water drops beneath the bottle and glass. There is, however, far more to the gin ad than meets the conscious eye. Be certain to view the ad, while relaxed, a few moments before continuing.

Let your eyes concentrate momentarily upon the third ice cube from the top. Without stretching your imagination beyond reasonable limits, can you see an E formed in the cube? Some interpret the letter at first as an F. But, hypothetically, for the moment consider the letter an E. Do not read further until the E is established clearly in your mind.

The second ice cube from the top is also interesting. Let your mind relax and consider what letter might be in this cube. This is slightly more difficult to perceive than the E. Start at the top of the lime slice, letting your eyes move left to the point of the slice, then down and right, following the lime pulp to about the midpoint on the slice where a black line (shadow) slants diagonally from the slice to the left. You should now be on the bottom line of the second ice cube, so follow the line to the left.

Now, briefly retrace the above instructions.

You should have outlined on the ice cube, in the silhouette formed by the lime slice, the letter S. Should you have come

up with another alternative, please note it for future reference.

Most people—roughly 90 percent—will at this point be able to discern clearly two letters in the ice cubes. S in the second and E in the third. Again, should any other meaningful possibilities have appeared, please note them.

Now look at the forth or bottom ice cube. Hold the page at arm's length and let your eyes move from the S to the E and then to the fourth ice cube. Most readers will immediately discern the third letter.

If you haven't discovered the letter by now, locate a point in the center of the collins glass at the bottom of the fourth ice cube where a track—somewhat similar to that made by a heavy automobile tire—angles up diagonally from the bottom of the cube. The track, though it becomes blurred halfway across the cube, extends to the top left corner. Now, locate the midpoint on this diagonal track. If you are relaxed enough, you will perceive a lightly etched line cutting diagonally across the first diagonal line. Give the perception time to register—and keep relaxed. If the X does not immediately appear, try looking away momentarily, then back quickly at the fourth cube.

### *Unconscious Sex*

You have just consciously perceived your first subliminal SEX. There will be many others. You cannot pick up a newspaper, magazine, or pamphlet, hear radio, or view television anywhere in North America without being assaulted subliminally by embeds such as those in the ice cubes. Incredulous though you might be at this point, these subliminal SEXes are today an integral part of modern American life—even though they have never been seen by many people at the conscious level.

You might consider, as well, that you instantly saw the ice cube SEX—at the unconscious level. This invisible dimension of meaning in the Gilbey's ad was not hidden on the *Time* cover. The SEX was available for anyone to see—all 24.2 million weekly *Time* readers—men, women, and children. Readers make such illusions invisible to the conscious mind through a psychological device psychologists have labeled *repression*, one of the perceptual defenses.

Keep in mind that this book is not telling you what you should see in the ad or what it should mean; it is only con-

cerned with the perception of phenomena you are neither supposed to see nor consciously supposed to deal with in terms of meaning. These are subliminal stimuli and they have been regularly used in the North American mass media for over twenty-five years without anyone getting wise to what was going on.

But, there is much more to the Gilbey's ad. At the risk of overextending the reader's credibility, could there possibly be a face in the top ice cube? It is a humorous cartoon-type face, reminiscent of the archetypal "Kilroy Was Here!" face that decorated men's rest room walls all over the world during World War II. Kilroy, of course, was probably the most famous graffiti voyeur in American history. The ice cube face appears to be peering down on the ice cube SEX below, and—with a slight stretch of the imagination—winking one eye at the reader.

Now, drop your eyes down to the bottom ice cube again. Look behind the X you earlier discovered in the cube. Could there possibly be another face peering out from behind the letter? Just to the right of the crossed lines in the X appears what could be described as an eye. To the left, hidden behind the heavy track diagonal, might be another eye. The nose could be formed by one of the markings in the track.

Give your mind time, at least thirty seconds, to assimilate consciously the outline marks of this face. It is probably that of a woman, as on the right side of the bottom ice cube are lines and shadows suggestive of long hair.

Once this woman peering out from behind the X is fairly well established in your mind, try to follow her line of sight. What does she appear to be looking at in the ad? You will probably find her line of sight is directed somewhere around the bottle cap which is lying casually beneath the frosty bottle.

The bottle cap is rather conventional—removed from the bottle by the artist to convey the idea that this symbolic Gilbey's gin is open, easily available to the reader. The reflection of the bottle cap, however, has several rather unusual dimensions as it reflects out of the mirrorlike table surface. With another only slight stretch of the imagination, the bottle and bottle cap reflections could be interpreted as a man's legs and partially erect genitals. At this point, you probably should take several deep breaths in order to relax, there is *much more to come*, if you'll pardon the expression. Sub-

liminals are very difficult to perceive consciously if you are the slightest bit tense or apprehensive.

The melting ice on the bottle cap could symbolize seminal fluid—the origin of all human life. The green color suggests peace and tranquility after tensions have been released. Therefore, the scene is likely after orgasm, not before. This interpretation is reinforced by the less than fully extended penis. The melting ice on the frosty bottle, of course, could also suggest seminal fluid. Who could ever have guessed Gilbey's had so much to offer these 24.2 million readers?

At this point, if you are curious and broad-minded, you might look between the reflection from the tonic glass and that of the bottle. The vertical opening between the reflection has subtle shadows on each side which could be interpreted as lips—vaginal lips, of course. At the top of the opening is a drop of water which could represent the clitoris.

If the scene were put into a story line, this still-open vagina is where the discharged penis has just been. The seminal frost all over the bottle might suggest to a primitive part of the human brain—the portion some theorists call the unconscious—that *coitus interruptus* had just occurred, or as the copy would suggest: "and keep your tonics dry!"

There appears one additional female genital symbol horizontally drawn into the tonic glass reflection. The vagina is closed, suggesting the owner might be lying down awaiting her turn.

When you add up the number of individuals symbolized subliminally in various parts of the advertisement, there are five—three women and two men, including our Kilroy-like voyeur in the top ice cube. The subliminal promise to anyone buying Gilbey's gin is simply a good old-fashioned sexual orgy which developed after "breaking out the frosty bottle."

### *Mental Pollution*

The Gilbey's ad was tested with over a thousand subjects. Sixty-two percent of these men and women reported feelings of sexual stimulation or excitement. Male test subjects appeared to resist a conscious response to the ad content slightly more than did the women. None of the men or women tested, however, was consciously aware of the subliminal content, or ever discovered the secret until it was explained to them after their responses were recorded. The ad ap-

pears to have been purposefully designed to reach both men and women through unconscious perceptual mechanisms.

The *modus operandi* of the ad is to sell Gilbey's through a subliminal appeal to latent voyeuristic or exhibitionistic tendencies within the unconscious minds of *Time* readers. The Gilbey's orgy has also appeared on the covers of several other national publications.

The unsettling thing about all this is that the Gilbey's ad is not an isolated instance of subliminal manipulation through pornography: North America's mass media is saturated with similar trickery—some of it far more morally objectionable than the Gilbey's ad. After all, advertising is a \$20 billion annual affair in the United States. Another billion dollars is spent in Canada. An enormous proportion of this expenditure today is dedicated to the research, development, and application of subliminal stimuli with strong sales or manipulative potentialities.

There are, of course, serious moral implications in the use of subliminal techniques such as this in public communication. An individual's right to decide issues, even if they involve only the purchase of a gin brand, on the basis of his own conscious determinations or free will, is a precious heritage basic to the entire concept of democratic freedoms.

Moreover, the invasion of one's privacy—there is nothing more private to an individual than his unconscious mind—is also considered a fundamental human right in Western society. Should anyone have the right, and North Americans must think this question out most carefully, to ruthlessly exploit the desires, needs, fears, or anxieties which function uncontrollably within each human being?

### *Health Dangers*

Subliminal persuasion can be even more dangerous to mental health. In the service of commercial profit, highly skilled technicians are probing into and manipulating the most intimate, subtle, and complicated mechanism of the human nervous system—a mechanism still virtually a mystery to science.

To illustrate: 9.5 percent of the test subjects who described a sexual response to the Gilbey's ad also reported pronounced *fear reactions*. The number of test subjects was too small to use as a base for completely accurate projections, but if this 9.5 percent was projected into the 24.2 mil-

lion *Time* readers, the distinct possibility arises that 2.3 million *Time* readers—assuming they had all perceived the inside back cover even momentarily—could have experienced pronounced negative feelings without knowing why they were upset.

Two typical individual fear reactions to the Gilbey's subliminals follow. They speak most eloquently for themselves. Not one word has been edited or changed. Neither of the two test subjects knew of the ad's subliminal contents when they wrote these reactions.

*Test Subject A: male, age 28, high school physical education instructor.*

It gave me a chilly, almost sinister feeling of watching something somewhat loathsome. My first sensation was that I was looking at something I had no business watching. I felt strange. Then I began to get a very alone feeling. It was cold, dark, and quiet. I felt as if I was looking in on "creation." This effect seemed to come from the stars in the background and the "gaseous" feeling I got from the green base. Still the predominant mood was one of uneasiness. Things did not seem to be quite right.

*Test Subject B: female, age 35, high school teacher.*

Coolness, remoteness, aloneness, aloofness, separateness, disengagement. These further resulted in fear, near panic, helplessness, and hopelessness.

Now it is scary! I don't even want to look at it. I want to put this "thing" as far away from me as I can get it.

It is hideous, like a monster. I feel trembling and I can feel perspiration on my hand. My rate of breathing has increased. This is so queer! I enjoyed the coolness of it initially. What has happened to me? I feel such a fear of this thing! This feeling didn't develop though, I think, until I started to write down the words. As I did so, I could sense this panic feeling building. Now I don't even want to look back at the ad to analyze it. Right now I dread the thought of doing so tomorrow night. It is as if by doing so I'll have to face something painful. I would rather look at a nest of wiggling snakes.

I still can't get rid of that terrible feeling. I feel as if

"something" were going to get me. It is a childish, primitive fear. Now I am ashamed of myself.

Shocking? Indeed, it is very shocking. This highly successful commercial representation might have been designed for display on the walls of a men's toilet by some frustrated exhibitionist. But far from it. The ad was designed by skilled, highly paid technicians in the fine art of subliminal manipulation.

It is staggering to consider that this subliminally pornographic Gilbey's ad could enter the homes of 5.5 million families and be read by up to 24.2 million individuals. Incredibly, none of these readers will consciously perceive what is being done to them. Many, indeed, will even respond to the subliminal promise of a wild sexual indulgence and purchase Gilbey's gin. The truth, of course, is that of all the enemies of sexual virility, alcohol is at the top of the list.

There are several other versions of the ad which have appeared in such publications as *TV Guide* and *Reader's Digest*. But again, this is only one illustration of subliminal technique—only one among thousands.

This, in essence, is what *Subliminal Seduction* is all about. First, however, we will look into a world in which media dominate the customs and culture, the norms and the nuances. And to gain meaningful insights, we must learn to look from almost a microscopic perspective at representative bits and pieces. Media content is assembled in small bits and pieces, but presented as an avalanche of perceptual stimuli in which the bits and pieces have become invisible. To penetrate the illusions and trickery, we must take a close-up, almost molecular approach to media content analysis. This is not at all easy, as our nervous systems have been carefully trained not to perceive consciously what is going on at this level.

It is virtually impossible to comprehend subliminal perception, or even to recognize it, without having explored various theories of perception and behavior. The next two chapters will survey and summarize what is known about subliminal phenomena.

## 2. The Language Within a Language

*Subliminal Languages Are Not Taught in Schools:* The basis of modern media effectiveness is a language within a language—one that communicates to each of us at a level beneath our conscious awareness, one that reaches into the uncharted mechanism of the human unconscious. This is a language based upon the human ability to *subliminally* or *subconsciously* or *unconsciously* perceive information. This is a language that today has actually produced the profit base for North American mass communication media. It is virtually impossible to pick up a newspaper or magazine, turn on a radio or television set, read a promotional pamphlet or the telephone book, or shop through a supermarket without having your subconscious purposely massaged by some monstrously clever artist, photographer, writer, or technician. As a culture, North America might well be described as one enormous, magnificent, self-service, subliminal massage parlor.

Subliminal perception is not a new phenomenon. The existence of the human unconscious has been documented over many centuries by composers, artists, poets, philosophers, and scientists. An intellectual fad exists today, especially in America, that insists nothing is significant unless it can be consciously quantified and programmed into a computer. Creative experiences and other insights into the subliminal dimensions of language and human behavior are often discarded as meaningless romanticism. Measurements are often confused with quantification. I quantify, therefore I am—reads the metaphysic of modern social science research.

Intuitive or insight logic, on the other hand, appears based upon an implicit perception at a level that cannot be defended as conscious thought. Insight conclusions are reached with limited, if any, conscious awareness of the process by

which the conclusion was obtained. Such conclusions are often even derogatorily described as *intuitions* or *guesses*.

### The Creative Unconscious

Many of the most significant scientific discoveries have been derived from intuitive, unconscious, or insight logic—including Albert Einstein's discovery of the relativity equations, if we can accept his own autobiographical testimony as to how the concept developed.

Much, if not most, of significant human thought operates in this strange wilderness of the unconscious mind. The unconscious apparently does not simply perceive *things*, but somehow perceives the *meaning of things*. Unconscious thought processes have long been believed to be the source of man's creative ability, perhaps the source of all his innovations. Composer Richard Wagner explained that mythology, folklore, and music—especially music—are the unconscious of the storyteller, composer, or musician speaking to the unconscious of the audience, society, or culture.

Several theorists believe intuitions and the entire creative process may be grouped together with dreams and subliminal perception as *prelogical insight experiences*, as opposed to the logical processes of reason through which humans consciously and purposefully rationalize their actions and feelings.

**Point One:** This study proceeds upon the premise that there exists in the human brain and nervous system something (a mechanism of uncertain description) responsible for such labels as the *unconscious* or the *subconscious*. That this machinery exists can be empirically demonstrated, beyond any doubt, to be a vital aspect of human behavior in all its manifestations.

**Point Two:** How this machinery (subconscious, unconscious, or what have you) works is largely unknown. Science, philosophy, and technology have so far produced only theories about how this subliminal portion of the brain functions. At present we really do not comprehend—in terms of bio-neuro-chemo-etc., operations, interrelationships, and actual circuitry—how the brain functions.

The various theories of both individual and social behavior, nevertheless, are often useful—not necessarily true, nor necessarily false—only useful. Most intellectual progress and comprehension of complex phenomena cease once the

mind deludes itself into believing it has uncovered a Holy Grail or an eternal truth. *Any meaningful analysis of reality must consider all such so-called truths as merely tentative expedients.*

This writer, therefore, cannot be completely certain whether Carl Jung's theory of archetypal symbolism, or Freud's theory of dream significance, or Arnheim's theory of Gestalt form significance, or Adler's inferiority complex theorization are right or wrong. They could well be either, or both. The defense or rejection of theory will be left to other writers searching for new theoretical syntheses.

As subliminal perception phenomena can be dealt with only in terms of theoretical assumptions, theories will be applied in this book only as a source from which subliminal phenomena can be explored. Much of this phenomena cannot be considered, explained, or even discussed without reference to theory as a tool with which to probe the unknown.

Any specialized reader, such as an artist concerned with actually embedding subliminal stimuli in a painting, would likely benefit from more precise explorations into the numerous theories of, say, how the human eye functions—no one is completely certain just how or why an eye performs. Theory is vitally important to an understanding of the highly complex world of illusions and realities in which we continue to survive. The social sciences have really produced very little certain, hard, or real knowledge during the past half century. Much of the present-day social sciences could be critically described as *antisocial* and *unscientific*. So much for this theory of theories.

This volume, therefore, has a limited objective—simply to establish and demonstrate the existence of subliminal reception within the human body and the use of subliminal techniques in the communication media which assault our senses during many hours of each day. This assault from the media has a specific ability to manage, control, and manipulate human behavior in the interests of a multibillion dollar national economy.

The range of effects upon the human nervous system of subliminal massaging through the media can only be touched upon in this volume. We know, beyond any question, that subliminal stimuli sell products. There is no question in the author's mind that these stimuli do much more to people than just sell them deodorants, denture adhesives, and the like. But the question of sociopathic or psychopathic media

effects must be left to another study. It will likely be most difficult for many readers to consider the effects of a phenomenon or technique they are still reluctant to admit exists.

### *Mechanical Man—A Model*

Though the mass communication media at present exploit primarily two of the human sensory inputs into the brain—sight and hearing—some of what is known about human sensory abilities should be briefly reviewed.

Aristotle initially explored the significance of our five basic senses: sight, hearing, taste, feeling, and smell. His definitions ended up in theological dogma, and severely restricted Western man's view of himself for nearly 2,000 years. During the Middle Ages the concept of five senses was integrated into scholastic philosophy, later to appear in such church ritual as *extreme unction*—a ceremony, performed by a priest when a person is near death, involving a blessing of the five senses.

Even further limiting man's view of himself were the various mechanistic schools of psychology in the twentieth century which insisted that senses be studied in isolation. For example, many current university psychology courses evaluate *sight* as separate from *taste*, from *hearing*, etc. This simplistic approach to man's study of his own body is often thought amusing by Asiatic scholars, many of whom have developed under an intellectual tradition that saw man as a naturally integrated assemblage of sensory inputs. The integrative-man notion is paramount in the traditions of Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, and Hindu thought. Only recently in the West has an integrative, non-Aristotelian insight into how man experiences the world and himself begun to develop as an aspect of existential philosophy, general semantics, and Zen Buddhism.

In simple practical terms, the idea can be demonstrated by the serving of food in Asiatic, as opposed to Western, traditions. In the East all senses are considered to be involved in dining. The way food appears, or feels, or smells influences the flavor. Also, of course, the total dining environment—emotions, color, temperature, sound, etc.—affect the flavor of the food. Perhaps thanks to Aristotle, and the institutions that used his studies as instruments of power, it is often very difficult for Westerners to appreciate all that is involved sensually even in such a simple and routine experience as dining.

Today, in the last half of the twentieth century, the concept of five senses is hopelessly anachronistic. There are generally acknowledged to exist at least thirty-seven differentiated sensory inputs into the human brain. More senses will likely be discovered and added to the list as time goes on. Of the thirty-seven senses, over two dozen are involved with touching.

If humans could be said to possess one basic sensory input that supplies the brain with information, it would involve *touching*—the sensation or experience of tactility. A human simply could not adjust and survive without touching. This could include both actual contact touching and touching by *synesthesia*, whereby touching can be experienced visually or via another sensory input; the phenomenon is frequently studied in art schools. One example of synesthesia would be a picture of a textured fabric which could stimulate the brain into a feeling of tactility or touching. Examples of synesthesia in art will be discussed later, in relation to a *Playboy* centerfold.

Now, considering there are at least thirty-seven sensory inputs, all these senses are inputting data simultaneously and constantly into the brain. A bias—temporarily favoring sight, or hearing, or whatever—may occur as a person changes concentration from, say, a newspaper to a radio broadcast, but none of the senses ever stops operating. Cooking aromas from the kitchen become an unnoticed or subliminal part of the message transmitted by a television program being viewed in the living room while dinner is being prepared.

This complex of at least thirty-seven separate sensory inputs into the brain—all operating continuously and simultaneously in a constantly changing series of biases where one sense or several become temporarily dominant—is complicated. But, the human sensory machine is even more complicated than even this suggests.

### *Conscious-Unconscious Perception*

Data provided from studies in neurology and psychology strongly support the conclusion that all senses (including those yet undiscovered) operate on at least two perceptual levels. Information is collected at what might be called a cognitive or conscious level, a level where each human is consciously aware of what is going on. Information is also collected simultaneously and continuously at a subliminal

level, a level at which there is no consciously apparent awareness of data entering the brain. There could be many other levels between conscious and unconscious perception, but for purposes of illustration, the discussion or theory will be restricted to only those two—conscious and unconscious.

These two major perceptual input subsystems are capable of operating quite independently of one another, often in direct opposition to one another. For example, a young man might consciously desire a sexual experience so strongly that he can think of nothing else. At the unconscious level, however, the young man could be terrified of sexual involvement. These two thought processes operating simultaneously within our young man could result in substantial unhappiness, possibly impotence.

The system that processes subliminal stimuli appears to deal mostly with very basic emotional information content and is thought to be the oldest part of the human brain developed during evolution. These simple subliminal manifestations of brain activity go on even when one is unconscious, or asleep, or in a coma. Further, many theorists maintain that the conscious mind merely adapts itself to the basic program established in the unconscious; *no significant belief or attitude held by any individual is apparently made on the basis of consciously perceived data.* Conscious considerations, rationalizations, and the significance given them by an individual appear to be merely accommodations to the unconscious.

The basic attitudinal or perceptual frame of reference, through which data are evaluated, appears to operate through the so-called unconscious. But, and this is important to consider, all human perception—whether conscious or unconscious—is a struggle toward meaning and significance. The name of the perceptual game, in fact, is *meaning*—a large measure of which our culture demands we repress or somehow consciously avoid.

So for the moment, consider each human brain as being simultaneously and continuously fed information by at least thirty-seven senses operating on at least two levels of perception. As bewildering, complicated, and possibly frightening as this appears, it has presumably been happening in our bodies for a very long time. Also, keep in mind how rapidly this human machine operates. Impulses flow through neurons in the body at a speed of roughly 60 meters per second. In the intricate complex of neurological structures within the body,

a staggering number of events can occur during, say, the time it takes a pencil to reach the floor after being dropped from the hand.

Another analogy, based upon the work of George Miller and others who study language and behavior phenomena, suggests that the words the human voice speaks are seven, plus or minus two, ahead or behind those already assembled in the brain waiting to be spoken. In other words, as these individual words are being written down, the author's brain is actually five to nine words ahead of the typewriter.

Perception, as Marshall McLuhan has expressed it, is total. Everything happens and is perceived in totality. The editing process—the small portion that becomes conscious—is somehow accomplished inside the brain, which retains the major portion of what is totally perceived in some kind of storage, over varying periods of time, completely unknown consciously to the individual.

The incredible complexity and speed of all language and behavior phenomena—and the inability of an individual to visualize this speed and complexity—make the whole subject of subliminal perception difficult to accept. This is especially true in Western cultures, which have strongly reinforced the individual's self-delusion that he can, and even must, consciously know all of what is going on around him.

The processes generally described above are largely unknown by what we presently refer to as "science," especially in terms of the complex interrelationships involved. There are only theories available which attempt to explain all of this—sometimes useful theories, but only theories. Modern man is still quite uncertain as to how the language and behavior mechanisms within his body actually function.

#### *Environmental Subliminal Influences*

Both our natural and man-made environments are full of influences perceived at this subliminal level; many of them remain subliminal simply because they are common, everyday aspects of our lives that go unnoticed consciously. It appears strange that so many contemporary social and behavioral scientists have carefully and systematically ignored such obvious things as the subliminal effects of, say, body language upon human relationships. This cannot be dismissed as merely an oversight.

Indeed, subliminal stimuli appear to be normal, perhaps

even necessary, to human survival and adjustment. These invisible perceptions apparently provide humans with significance in an otherwise insecure and unstable world. Subliminals could not be legislated out of existence. Perhaps some of the excessive and potentially destructive commercial applications in the press and television might be restrained, or at least exposed, discussed, argued, and studied; but, subliminal influences will be a part of human life as long as there are humans. Somehow humans must learn to live with them.

The term *subliminal perception* will be used here to describe sensory inputs into the human nervous system that circumvent or are repressed from conscious awareness—or, more simply, inputs that communicate with the unconscious. The term has, of course, popular implications which suggest brainwashing, manipulation, and other unsavory—though romantic—practices. Other, possibly more scientifically defensible names for the phenomenon are *subliminal reception*, *threshold regulation*, *unconscious perception*, and *subception*.

Indeed, it might well be argued that today—in a modern world dependent upon and emersed within an environment dominated by the mass media—anyone who cannot read and understand the subliminal languages of symbolic illusion is functionally illiterate.

Industrial designers include subliminal meanings in products such as automobiles, soft-drink bottles, lawn mowers, clothing, food containers, cosmetics, pharmaceutical products, homes and home furnishings, appliances, and virtually everything produced for consumers in our commercial fairyland of mass production.

The packaging industry, for example, has long since ceased to be simply the provider of bottles, tubes, and cartons into which something is safely and conveniently stored. Packagers are today merchants of symbolic images which supply significance and fictional delusions of variety and value to a multitude of competitive products. A stroll through any modern supermarket will reveal that for many of the items which we have come to view as life necessities, the packaging has cost more than the contents. Competition among consumer products has developed into a contest between competitive symbols or images rather than between material values. And the struggle for market supremacy is waged through the

consumers' unconscious minds rather than through their conscious awareness.

As an example, the giant New York-headquartered International Flavor and Fragrances, Inc.—with 1971 sales of \$112 million, manufacturing outlets in fourteen countries, and sales in over a hundred countries—has contributed to Masters and Johnson's Reproductive Biology Research Foundation for studies into the relationship between odor and sex. Scientists have long been aware that higher mammals communicate by secreting subliminal odorous substances. IFF is hot on the track of a subliminal aromatic released by women during ovulation. If they can synthesize a chemical capable of amplifying the odor, consider the possible effects of such a subliminal aromatic in perfumes and colognes.

### *Struggles to Understand the Unconscious*

The first recorded mention of subliminal perception may be in the writings of Democritus (400 B.C.), who maintained "much is perceptible which is not perceived by us." Plato also dealt with the notion in his work *Timaeus*. Aristotle more specifically discussed subliminal awareness thresholds in his *Parva Naturalia* nearly two thousand years ago and appears to have been the first to suggest that consciously unperceived stimuli could affect dreams. Aristotle, 2,250 years ago, explained in his dream theory that: "Impulses occurring in the daytime, if they are not very great and powerful, pass unnoticed because of greater waking impulses. But in the time of sleep, the opposite takes place, for then small impulses seem to be great. This is clear from what happens in sleep. Men believe it is lightning and thundering when there are only faint echoes in their ears. They believe they are enjoying honey and sweet flowers, when only a drop of phlegm is slipping down their throats." Aristotle anticipated what in the early twentieth century came to be known as the *Poetzel effect*.

The philosopher Montaigne alluded to the phenomenon of subliminal perception in 1580. Leibniz, in 1698, also probed the notion that "There are numberless perceptions, little noticed, which are not sufficiently distinguished to be perceived or remembered, but which become known through certain consequences."

The work of Sigmund Freud and his colleagues, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, explored new

concepts and theories of the subconscious or unconscious. Freud's dream theory formed a basis upon which one of his associates, Dr. O. Poetzle, made one of the first scientifically significant discoveries about subliminal perception. Freud described dreams as having three major characteristics: (1) they preserved sleep by converting potentially disturbing material into dream images; (2) they represented wish fulfillments; and (3) dream stimuli were symbolically transformed before emerging in the dream, especially those stimuli potentially threatening to an individual.

Poetzle discovered that a stimulus or information consciously noted by a person does not appear in subsequent dreams. Studying reactions to embedded or hidden figures in drawings, Poetzle discovered that dream content was apparently drawn from stimuli perceived at an unconscious level prior to the dream. The scientist formulated his *Law of Exclusion* around the curious observation that humans exclude consciously perceived data from dreams. He concluded that dream content was primarily composed of subliminally perceived information. Poetzle speculated that Freud's transformation concept, the third dream characteristic, was essentially a transformation of subliminally perceived material. This transformation phenomenon was later described as a *perceptual defense*—a mechanism whereby the individual protects himself from information which might have unpleasant, potentially damaging, or anxiety-producing consequences. The threatening information deposited in the unconscious must either remain buried or be transformed into something relatively harmless before admission to consciousness. Dream analysis during psychotherapy is based upon interpreting the transformed state slowly and carefully so a patient can learn to live comfortably with the troublesome memory as it emerges from the unconscious.

Poetzle's colleagues theorized that the eyes make about 100,000 fixations daily—only a small portion of the information in these fixations is consciously experienced. Somehow, subliminally perceived content is singled out and transformed for reproduction in dreams at a later point in time. This discovery suggested that subliminally induced stimuli performed with a delayed reaction "alarm clock" or "time bomb" effect upon behavior.

*A conscious association can, in effect, trigger a subliminal percept buried deeply in the unconscious weeks, months, or possibly years after the subliminal percept occurred.* Consider

the promise such a demonstrable theory held for anyone in the business of controlling and influencing human behavior.

By 1919 a relationship was strongly established by Poetzle between *subliminal stimuli, posthypnotic suggestion, and compulsive neurosis*. An individual will perform acts which he has been instructed or programmed to do without any knowledge of why he is doing such a thing. The relationship between subliminal stimuli and posthypnotic suggestions is extremely important.

### Unseen Manipulators

The study of subliminal perception again came to public attention in the late 1950s. Behavioral scientists had quietly experimented with Poetzle's theories for thirty years. In 1957 one American market researcher, James Vicary, demonstrated the tachistoscope, a machine for flashing on a screen invisible messages which could be seen by the subconscious. After the publication in 1958 of Vance Packard's book, *The Hidden Persuaders*, motivation researchers Ernest Dichter and Louis Cheskin were publicly admonished for their scientific contributions which had supported advertisers' attempts to manipulate mass audiences.

At the time, legislators and the public were shocked at the implications involved in subliminal or subaudial perception. Legislation was introduced—though never passed—in half a dozen state legislatures and in the U.S. Senate, to prohibit legally the use of subliminal techniques in the public communication media.

This public reaction of a dozen years ago is interesting to review. *Newsday* regarded the subliminal device as "the most alarming invention since the atomic bomb." *The New Yorker* stated, "we had reached the sad age when minds and not just houses could be broken and entered." Phyllis Battelle of the *New York Journal-American* said, "Aside from my basic horror at the idea of being prodded into acting without all my wits about me . . . I picture the invisible commercial as a direct route to incontinence." *The Saturday Review* was eloquent. In a full-page editorial they said: "The subconscious mind is the most delicate part of the most delicate apparatus in the entire universe. It is not to be smudged, sullied or twisted in order to boost the sales of popcorn or anything else. Nothing is more difficult in the modern world than to protect the privacy of the human soul." Congressman James

Wright of Texas sponsored a Federal bill to forbid any device that was "designed to advertise a product or indoctrinate the public by means of making an impression on the subconscious mind."

In a recent survey of business and community leaders, the more than 90 percent who had heard of subliminal communication techniques believed the techniques to be prohibited by statute in both the United States and Canada. Many individuals interviewed appeared revolted at even the suggestion that such techniques would be considered for use by American business. Roughly 60 percent of those who had heard of subliminals believed the whole idea of subliminal communication was absurd, science-fiction nonsense.

A check of U.S. and Canadian statutes failed to turn up any legal prohibitions against the use of subliminal or subaudial techniques in public communication. Though many such laws were introduced during 1957-58, and their introduction received wide publicity, none of these laws was ever enacted. It was, therefore, strange to discover that virtually everyone appeared to believe himself protected from manipulation through his unconscious. Even those who did not believe such manipulation possible were certain they were "protected by laws."

### *Mechanical Induction*

The initial experiments with mechanically induced subliminal perception were based upon the tachistoscope which is simply a film projector with a high-speed shutter which flashes messages every five seconds at 1/3000th of a second. The speeds can be varied for different effects. The tachistoscope was patented through the United States patent office by Precon Process and Equipment Corporation of New Orleans, October 30, 1962, and carries patent number 3,060,795.

The tachistoscope was initially used to flash messages superimposed over motion pictures in theaters or upon film being transmitted through television. The high-speed messages were invisible to the conscious mind, but planted messages in the viewer's unconscious which were acted upon by a statistically significant number of people. During one six-week test of the machine in a theater, involving 45,699 patrons, messages were flashed on alternate days: "Hungry? Eat Popcorn," and "Drink Coca-Cola." During the six weeks,

popcorn sales increased 57.7 percent and Coca-Cola sales 18.1 percent.

Audience reactions to tachistoscope-induced messages have been exhaustively studied. Though all people cannot be influenced so simply, a statistically significant number of people in any audience will obey the commands given subliminally, apparently, as long as there is no deep conflict about the command within their mind.

For example, a person who really hated a certain product, say "Clink," would not likely respond to subliminal messages commanding him to "Buy Clink." Considering the semantic possibilities available to advertisers, however, this may be small consolation. The conscious content might say "Buy Clink," which the viewer rejects at the conscious level. The subliminal message might read, "Buy Virility with Clink." What North American male could resist the promise of virility?

A recent chat with the research director of a major national food product distributor revealed that his corporation had sold his tachistoscope three years earlier. He called the instrument "obsolete" and proceeded to explain the latest twist in mechanical subliminal perception devices.

Light intensity projected beneath the level of conscious awareness brings about an audience reaction far superior to that achieved by the tachistoscope. A simple projector is connected to a rheostat and the light intensity is turned down to below the level that the conscious eye perceives. The message, nevertheless, is still perceived by the unconscious mind.

The research director explained this is far more effective than the tachistoscope, because the message is transmitted continuously rather than intermittently and cannot be detected. Tachistoscope flashes are apparent in an oscilloscope as they intermittently break up the continuous patterns. Low-intensity light is undetectable since it becomes a regular part of the continuing wave pattern. Experiments with ultraviolet photography, he explained, have also failed to detect the unseen images. Brief telephone calls during July, 1971, to New York, Chicago, and Toronto located thirteen commercial research firms which offered mechanically induced subliminal message services to advertisers, or anyone for that matter, who could pay their fee.

Frightening though it may appear, devices to mechanically induce subliminal stimuli are much more than merely mar-

keting toys. They are being used commercially every day in North America, but they do imply a certain risk of discovery and public denouncement. There are other, nonmechanically induced, subliminal techniques just as effective.

Today in American advertising it is not what you consciously see that sells, it is what stimulates the unconscious. In the words of Marshall McLuhan, "advertising is a subliminal pill designed to massage the unconscious."

### *Current State of the Art*

Experimental research in the late 1950s yielded data strongly emphasizing the enormous potential for the mass communication industry of subliminally induced print and electronic media content.

By the late 1960s subliminal perception had been exhaustively tested in at least eight areas of human behavior: *dreams, memory, value norm anchor points, conscious perception, verbal behavior, emotions, drives, and perceptual defenses*. There is, at present, no serious question that human activity can be influenced by stimulation or information of which individuals, groups, or even societies are completely unaware.

**Dreams:** The study of dreams has provided wide insights into subliminal phenomena. Subliminally induced content, such as that in the Gilbey's ad (Figure 1), has been recovered from dreams days or weeks after the initial exposure. Dream analysis has, for over half a century, provided a major technique of demonstrating the existence of subliminally induced information in the minds of test subjects over extended time periods. Dreams, of course, are one of the major empirical events regularly occurring through which unconscious processes can be studied.

A strong relationship has been developed between posthypnotic suggestions and subliminally induced information. The two techniques of manipulating the unconscious appear to have much in common. In fact, the hypnosis model may provide insight into the individual or social influences of subliminal media content.

Subliminal stimuli and posthypnotic suggestions are both unavailable to normal conscious perception. They both affect behavior without conscious awareness. And, they both involve a unique *trusting* relationship between subject and hypnotist or audience and media.

Like posthypnotic suggestions, subliminal stimuli may cause a symbolic transformation or modification before the information emerges in a dream. Subliminally induced dreams are relatively easy to decode when the input or stimulus is known to a researcher. In one experiment with posthypnotic suggestion a female volunteer test subject was told while under hypnosis that she would dream about committing fellatio with her employer, toward whom she professed antagonism. The instruction was then removed from her consciousness by posthypnotic amnesia—simply a suggestion she not remember the instructions upon waking. She was also given a posthypnotic instruction to report dreams which occurred that night. The next day she reported a dream in which she bit off the end of a banana which had been offered to her by the employer.

Some theorists believe that subliminal perception, like posthypnotic suggestions, is unlikely to cause anyone to do anything he might not wish to do under normal life conditions. One note of caution should nevertheless be considered. A posthypnotic suggestion might well lead a subject to follow a command he might not consciously wish to follow, but unconsciously desire very strongly to follow. Experiments have shown that some test subjects under hypnosis will throw what they believe to be acid into another person's face after a posthypnotic suggestion to do so.

Similarly, information has been recovered from the dreams of test subjects exposed to several of the illustrations in this book. The Gilbey's orgy (Figure 1) was recovered from dreams several days after exposure in the form of a kissing game at a children's party where "spin the bottle" was played. The test subject thought it rather strange that the six children in her dream were drinking Gilbey's gin.

The three subliminal wolves in the Calvert Volcano ad (see Figure 16) were recovered from a dream a week after exposure as three wolves howling outside a cabin while the test subject lay dead surrounded by his family who were drinking whiskey—the subject was uncertain of the brand.

### *The Con in Confidence*

The apparent similarities between subliminal stimuli and posthypnotic suggestions are extremely important in terms of the *trusting* relationship necessary for the two techniques' effectiveness in planting suggestions within the unconscious.

Mass communication media's image of *trust* or confidence (often referred to as a high credibility source), which has been established by public relations, as vital to advertising and media effectiveness. Unless magazines, newspapers, or TV programs communicate an image of trust and confidence, subliminal advertising content will not effectively and predictably motivate brand preferences or purchasing activity.

A curious parallel seems to exist between media—with its high-credibility images—and the confidence man. In a prison environment, for example, the one crime not accepted by inmates is *confidence* or *bunko*. Inmates are generally indifferent to the criminal conviction responsible for their cell-mates' incarceration. Murderers, thieves, rapists, and the rest live more or less compatibly with other inmates. The con man is the one notable exception and, invariably, the loneliest man in prison. Inmates know that in order to commit a *bunko* or *con*, the mark had to be first manipulated into a trusting relationship.

Similarly, in the mass communication industry, media content—news, programming, and the like—has degenerated into devices to create a high-credibility media image which can be merchandized to advertisers. Once the reader or viewer trusts or believes or identifies, subliminal advertising content—like posthypnotic suggestions—can most effectively control and modify human behavior. Media audiences should be cautioned never to forget the *con* in confidence or the *sin* in sincere.

Public-communication media have concentrated upon the development of subliminal technique directed at audio-visual sensory inputs during the past fifteen years.

Conscious perception operates within specific frequencies of both light and sound. However, outside the range consciously perceived by the eye and ear, sub-threshold frequencies exist which are capable of communication. Information transmitted at these invisible frequencies is perceived only by the unconscious portion of the human brain.

Thus, visually there is a finite limit for both speed and intensities of light that can be consciously perceived by the eye; the frequency ranges outside this limit are invisible to the eye and the conscious mind and are capable of inputting data into the unconscious. Likewise, auditory perception at the conscious level is limited to a finite range of sound, volume, and tonal frequency levels; beyond these ranges are

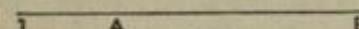
frequencies where information can be transmitted invisibly into the unconscious.

The so-called "silent dog whistle" is an example of sound frequencies invisible to human conscious perception—though dogs consciously hear these high frequencies. People can also hear these whistles, though not via their mechanism of conscious perception. Data transmitted at these high tonal frequencies will register in the unconscious.

One of the striking things encountered in the literature of subliminal perception is the repeated emphasis upon *passive receptivity* as a means by which individuals can become aware of subliminal stimuli. Pressure or tension appears to limit an individual's sensitivity to (ability to consciously perceive) subliminals. The most effective means of making such material available to consciousness is by learning to relax completely. Tests under hypnosis, self-hypnosis, yoga meditation, as well as relaxation simply by deep breathing, indicate that often subliminals can become liminal simply through relaxation.

Indeed, relaxation appears to have an extraordinary effect upon human perception. In one case, after several minutes of deep breathing and relaxation, several obscene words in a liquor advertisement appeared out of a background. Someone in the room asked a question. Though the observer did not answer at that moment, the mere tension-creating effect of the question upon his nervous system inhibited his perception of the low-threshold stimuli. The subliminally embedded obscene words simply disappeared from conscious view in response to the question.

It appears that *once the subliminal information becomes apparent to the conscious mind, the persuasive or manipulative potential in the data is destroyed*. Insidiously, however, the more subliminal or deeply buried a stimulus, the greater the probable effect. This can be demonstrated by a simple straight line. From A to B, let us say, is the range of conscious perception either at the auditory or visual level. Line 1 to A is the range of subliminal perception.



The closer the stimulus is to 1, the more effective it is likely to be. Suppose the word SEX was embedded in an ad at a subliminal level just below A. They might embed the word

FUCK or SUCK at an even deeper subliminal level slightly above 1. The deeper embedded words would have the strongest impact upon the psyche.

### *Behavioral Effects*

*Verbal Behavior:* Not only have the taboo four-letter words proved effective in manipulating the response of mass audiences, but other words, with taboo implications, have also been demonstrated to possess subliminal power. Words such as *shot* (shit), *whose* (whore), *pints* (penis), and *cult* (cunt), which differ by only one or two letters from certain taboo and emotional words, can evoke strong demonstrable emotional reactions of which the individual is totally unaware. The word *tastes* is very frequently used in ad copy. A slight change of one letter, and the word becomes *testes*. Twenty-six advertisements in a recent issue of *Life* magazine used the word *come* in their ad copy.

A wide range of experiments have shown that these emotionally loaded words can actually evoke physiological signs of emotional disturbance. Electroencephalograph (EEG) tests on people while they were exposed to word lists containing words with emotional implications, have produced increases in theta rhythms, variations in heart rate, and suppression of alpha rhythms—reactions similar to those of people under strong emotional stimulation.

*Memory:* What is generally referred to as memory takes on much greater complexity when both the conscious and unconscious memories are considered. Information within the memory, or storage area within the brain, fluctuates in and out of conscious awareness in response to complex association patterns which appear to be dampened or modulated by perceptual defense or repression mechanisms.

Humans, in effect, remember what they wish to remember, and—in one degree or another—have the ability to forget, ignore, or repress information which might produce anxiety or discomfort. Memory is tied inextricably to the acceptable wisdoms within a society or culture.

Merchandisers, by embedding subliminal trigger devices in media, are able to evoke a strong emotional relationship between, say, a product perceived in an advertisement weeks before and the strongest of all emotional stimuli—love (sex) and death. Most of the illustrations used in this book demon-

strate subliminal technique as memory enrichment or delayed-action memory stimuli.

Memory, further, appears organized in terms of a specific item's emotional importance to an individual. Most perceptual defenses, ways each human has of avoiding anxiety-producing conscious memories, will limit conscious memory.

SEX also establishes—in our culture—the distinct subliminal possibility of rejection. Rejection fear is a deeply conditioned aspect of North American culture. We are never permitted to ignore the expectation of rejection; it is emphasized repeatedly in advertising for cosmetics, deodorants, clothing, drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and so on. Beginning with the peculiarities of our no-touch culture, where parents stop touching children at very early ages, the fear of rejection is a well-oiled main bearing in the engine of American marketing and sales promotion.

Rejection fear is especially pernicious as it operates, for the most part, beneath our conscious awareness. When the fear of rejection subliminally activates an early infantile memory of rejection—of which everyone has an abundance in our society—an unconscious oral fantasy will almost always be evoked. Feelings of rejection, it has been abundantly demonstrated, are usually dealt with by some oral indulgence—eating, smoking, drinking, etc.

### *Value Judgments*

*Value Norm Anchor Points:* One very critical and disturbing consequence of subliminal manipulation has been demonstrated in dozens of experiments by changing the position (anchor point) from which an individual evaluates the world about him. Anchor points might be described as the position between two opposed concepts from which an individual evaluates loud or soft, heavy or light, good or bad, moral or immoral, rich or poor, strong or weak, sane or insane, and so on. A subliminal stimulus and a posthypnotic suggestion both have the ability to move the anchor point between virtually any two such concepts in any direction desired.

As an illustration, two university classes were shown a picture of a male model taken from a *Playboy* magazine advertisement projected upon a screen. They were asked to evaluate the ad in terms of masculine and feminine on a five-point scale.

The first class evaluated the model as it appeared in the

magazine. Over 95 percent of the students classified the model within a range of 3-4 on the scale. The students were very similar as to ages, socio-economic backgrounds, religions, etc.

Another similar group of students were shown the same *Playboy* ad, but superimposed upon the projection was a tachistoscoped word flashed invisibly at 1/3000th of a second every five seconds: MAN. The scale dramatically changed when they were requested to evaluate what they consciously thought they saw:

Masculine	1	2	3	4	5	Feminine
1st Class	1	2	66	29	2	
2nd Class	26	35	21	11	7	

Value norms are critically important to human survival and adjustment.

Humans are continuously indoctrinated by the invisible pressures of "culture" toward certain anchor points or base reference points for evaluations. For example, people within a generally common culture will tend to agree on general criteria of hot or cold, loud or soft, heavy or light, large or small, strong or weak. Compared with a Panamanian, an Eskimo would have a totally different concept of hot and cold. Teen-agers, with their rock music, have a different notion of loud and soft than do most adults. A construction engineer who operates a giant crane daily has different reference points for heavy and light than does a watchmaker.

In a single culture, however, there is strong unconscious adherence to a large assemblage of reference points. They are usually not acknowledged or discussed until someone ignores or violates them. This violation occurs often from outsiders, who are likely to be punished for their transgressions against what is "normal" in the particular group.

Small discrepancies from these reference points can be pleasant, providing diversity and innovation. Large discrepancies from the reference points tend to be very unpleasant, often evoking group-imposed suppression or controls.

Value norms involve nearly everything in our lives—from notions of temperature to complex standards of sexual or economic behavior—and most are invisible. Anchor points can be moved around, controlled if you will, by subliminal stimuli. Anchors can even be added if they do not exist, or

manipulated upward or downward to serve a commercial objective.

Rock music is an example of media content which, over a number of years, drastically changed the meaning of loud and soft in order to even further isolate a rich market segment for record sales. High-volume sound is isolating, whether it emanates from hi-fi stereophonic speakers or from a boiler factory. Isolated markets are exclusive hunting grounds for marketing technicians.

It should be relatively easy, given the power of mass communication media, to reorganize verbal value systems surrounding any individual or subject. For example, a political candidate could be made to appear more honest, more trustworthy, and more sincere than his actual appearance and voice might lead one to believe. These values, one might conclude, are often illusions buried within illusions.

A long-time basic theorem of successful popular recording is the simple principle that the kids will buy almost anything certain to drive their parents up the wall. As far as anyone can find out, this has long been a fundamental principle of the record industry. Record companies, like so many other corporations dependent upon the youth market, have turned the coming-of-age problems of Americans into a solid industry which substitutes for what, in more primitive and tribal societies, would be considered a puberty ritual. Young people have always had the need to cut the cord at some point in time and become adults. This was a painful and too often traumatic experience even at the time of Socrates, as he testified in his *Dialogues*. There is no reason to believe it is any less painful today or, for that matter, more painful. It is a normal event in life; at least it was until it was proven to have staggering commercial possibilities.

A tribesman in a New Guinea aboriginal tribe, when he reaches puberty, will be sent out alone in the jungle to demonstrate his manhood. He will possibly kill an enemy in battle, shrink a head, or accomplish some other feat considered the prerogative of male adults. In our Madison Avenue-dominated society, heads are shrunk only in psychiatrists' offices. The record industry records the plaintive puberty pleadings on plastic discs which sell millions of copies.

By increasing the volume of popular music, thereby making the recordings even more unbearable to an older generation (selectively manipulating the anchor point between loud and soft between two age groups), rock music becomes

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By increasing the volume of popular music, thereby making the recordings even more unbearable to an older generation (selectively manipulating the anchor point between loud and soft between two age groups), rock music becomes

even more special to the affluent youth culture. Judgments of loudness were altered by introducing tones and harmonics at subaudible levels. These subaudible sounds, especially those in the bass ranges, became audible when the volume was increased. Record producers, with their highly sophisticated electronic equipment, were like the farmer leading his jack-ass by a carrot dangling from a pole. They manipulated the rock market into reaching further and further for subaudible stimuli by continuing to increase volume. Volume increase expands the frequency range which can be heard at both conscious and unconscious levels.

However, there appears to be a human limitation regarding loudness. Many rock fans of five years ago, now in their early twenties, have begun to wear hearing aids. A few have already learned to read lips.

### Cultural Sets

*Conscious Perception:* There is considerable evidence that consciousness is built around various groups of "sets," or ways of seeing, hearing, or experiencing the realities around us. Sets are usually established by cultures and subcultures. For example, many theorists have speculated that a society's basic sets or perspectives are established by the economic means of subsistence. An engineer will likely see a bridge across a deep canyon in far different terms than would a truck driver, social worker, or housewife who must cross the bridge to reach a market each day. A physician, moreover, would likely have a distinctively different organization of "sets" than would an automobile salesman. Some people are able to assimilate a large number of sets during their lifetime.

An example of set value systems would consist of the Soviet and the United States concepts of democracy. A citizen of either country would discuss democratic concepts with a passionate belief in the democratic *truthfulness* of his system. An outside observer, if one could be found who was uninvolved in the polemic, would find that each person's conceptualization of "democracy" was based upon an entirely different group of basic sets or perspectives. Both individuals were probably quite truthful in their concept of democracy as derived from their respective sets.

Sets are thought to be maintained by inhibitory mechanisms involved with human consciousness. This inhibitory process may be fundamental to the human's concept of re-

ality. Another way of expressing the paradox is, *a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing*. Ways of coping with "right" or "wrong" concepts within a culture or society are established through the use of sets.

Sets can perhaps be generally defined as traditional or generally followed ways of perceiving reality at the conscious level. Subliminal conditioning by one's culture establishes these sets during early childhood. Culture has been defined as merely a unique organization of sets—sets, however, usually invisible to members of the culture.

The art of the stage magician, as well as the mass communication expert, involves circumventing these traditional ways in which the world is perceived. Various optical illusions—the famous two facing profiles outlining the shape of a goblet, for example—demonstrate the problem of sets. In the goblet illusion, the mind will likely keep switching back and forth between the two illusions—faces or goblet.

In the Gilbey's ad (Figure 1), however, the audience's established set pattern demands they see only a gin bottle and a collins glass. Indeed, at the conscious level at least, over 24 million readers presumably could have seen this page and consciously interpreted only what was within their traditional sets or culturally induced expectations. At the unconscious level, however, the real brand preference motivation trigger—an orgy with five participants—was fed into their unconscious. A major part of the set, of course, is the belief that the prestigious *Time* magazine would never do anything so outrageous to their readers. Such widespread belief in high-credibility information sources increases a society's vulnerability to subliminal manipulation.

Should the readers' conscious minds have been unable to channel closely into a set, the illusion could not have been used. Anyone able to think consciously outside his sets—a most difficult thing to do, usually requiring extensive training—would have stood an excellent chance of penetrating the illusion. Of the over 1,000 subjects involved in the many Gilbey's ad experiments, none ever penetrated the illusion or discovered the subliminal content on his own.

Interpretations of facial expressions have been experimentally demonstrated as modifiable by subliminal stimuli. In one such experiment, test groups were shown a sketch of an expressionless face. One group was subliminally exposed to the word *angry* subliminally tachistoscoped (at 1/3000th of a second) over the expressionless face. Another group received

the word *happy* over the same face at the subliminal level. Both groups overwhelmingly interpreted the emotional content of the blank face consistent with the subliminal stimuli.

Backward masking or metacontrast is another technique which, though not purely subliminal, does affect both conscious and unconscious perception. The technique is used on television advertising and in TV programs such as "Laugh In." A quick joke sequence is spliced into the continuity ahead of a longer, slower, less funny comedy sequence. The quick sequence, though seen consciously, cannot be consciously remembered; it is masked by the later longer sequence. However, the emotional effect of the first sequence carries through the second.

Virtually everyone in North America has found himself laughing at a "Laugh In" joke without being able consciously to recall the joke. The quick splice simply establishes a carry-over mood for a longer, perhaps not so humorous sequence. Coca-Cola uses a similar approach in its rapid-interval mosaic television advertising. The technique has also been applied to poetry and literature.

Subliminal stimuli exert a significant influence upon behavior related to fantasy production. Consciously perceived sexual fantasies are common, predictable responses to subliminal materials. The fear of rejection, stimulated subliminally, has originated oral, wish-fulfillment fantasies built around some earlier rejection in the test subject's life. As *oral gratification is a basic human response to rejection threats*, the rejection theme is a persistent and successful technique used in the merchandising of cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, and food.

In a series of experiments, commands were given to test subjects to perform certain acts, such as "write" or "don't write." When consciously perceived, the commands had virtually no effect upon the subjects when made against counter commands by an equally authoritative source. Subliminal commands, however, in spite of conscious counter commands, were acted upon by the test subjects.

### *Emotional Response*

Three types of emotional experience—if they could be conveniently categorized and defined—to which the unconscious appears particularly sensitive include:

1. *Experiences that conflict with cultural taboos of long standing.* A large proportion of any society's taboos directly or indirectly involve sex and death—the beginning and the end of life.

2. *Experiences relative to personal or group neurosis or psychosis.* These would include a wide range of psychopathology—from phobic responses to serious delusions of persecution or even paranoia.

3. *Experiences acquired from recent painful or anxiety-producing situations.* These might include responses to a wide range of recent difficulties in such areas as marriage, health, employment, etc.

Much like hypnosis, subliminal stimuli have been demonstrated to arouse or initiate all three types of emotional experience as well as activate autonomic bodily functions—blood pressure, respiration, or other processes within the body which function automatically. As emotion and intellect are inextricably interrelated, emotional significance is an aspect of meaning. The ease or difficulty with which persons, words, pictures, or things are recognized depends upon their meaning or personal significance involving some aspect of emotion—fear, anger, love, hate, etc.

The stronger the emotional implication to an individual or group, the more powerful subliminal stimulation is likely to be. The more puritan or inhibited the individual or group receiving the stimuli, the more likely they are to be emotionally affected by stimuli counter to their inhibitions. The direction of emotional involvement appears relatively unimportant. At the subliminal level either love or death will ensure an emotional response and an identification with products or brands. The only emotional state mass media communicators must avoid, if they expect to be successful, is neutrality or indifference from their audience's unconscious.

*Drive-Related Behavior:* Memory is also related to drives or sources of motivation. Such drives as sex, aggression, hunger, thirst, territoriality, and maternity are sufficient to evoke related memories at either the conscious or unconscious level. Hunger, for example, could trigger a conscious or unconscious memory of a restaurant advertisement. This drive-memory interrelationship could also be strengthened by the subliminal emotional stimulus of sex embedded in the advertisement. The result: an intense feeling that you want to

have dinner in a specific restaurant. This precise subliminal technique is part of the main course in virtually all of the nationally franchised restaurants—Howard Johnson's, Colonel Sanders' Chicken, etc.

In terms of motivating behavior, subliminal stimuli appear to work best when they can relate unconscious memory traces to consciously occurring drive systems. For example, a cigarette ad may show a couple on a walk in the country on a beautiful spring afternoon—a scene in which the reader may identify with one of the models used. Suppose that embedded in the trees or grass are the words SEX aimed at the unconscious. The SEX establishes the possibility of the reader unconsciously identifying with a model, relating drive-oriented behavior with the cigarette brand.

Audiences, however, cannot be simply avalanched with drive-related stimuli if media are going to achieve maximum effectiveness. Subjects need to be primed to accept drive-related subliminal input. This calls for a reinforcing integration of media editorial content and advertising. The notion that advertising and editorial or program content are separate is merely one of the mythologies of the mass media.

For example, the articles, fiction, and interviews of *Playboy* magazine serve as primers for the subliminal trigger within the ads. Readers are flattered into a narcotized state of self-admiration by the sex-oriented consciously perceived content, as a way to set them up for the advertising manipulation. The same general technique works in all media. Televised football games, portraying a struggle for male dominance and territory, play into viewers' dominance-aggression-oriented drive systems. Sports fans are, in effect, set up or primed by the game to absorb the Schlitz, Gillette, or Chevrolet advertisements with their subliminal commands directing brand preferences.

A newspaper also presents, via its nonadvertising, or "news" content, a subliminally perceived picture of the world which primes the reader for drive-related response to advertising content. In the absence of any strong existing habit structure or contrary drive state, subliminals will usually influence overt behavior.

In media, it is the function of content—news, articles, pictures, etc.—to reinforce existing habit structures or modes of thought. For this reason, most newspapers are extremely culture bound and must remain so to fulfill their economic functions. They must, generally, reinforce the self-image de-

lusions and fantasies of their community of readers or cease to exist economically.

For example, in North America there is available an enormous variety of media—more on a per capita population basis than in any other continent. The problem is that people read those publications or view those programs which reinforce their predispositions. They attend to ideas with which they already agree. The function of mass communication media, then, becomes one of maintaining the prejudices of a particular audience rather than changing or expanding its attitudes, opinions, and beliefs.

Though *Ramparts* magazine and *The Wall Street Journal* can be read by anyone with the purchase price, the readership will never overlap significantly. Each publication is purchased and read because of its ability to tell the reader what he wants to hear about the world and about himself as the center of his mythical universe.

Underground newspapers are flourishing among the so-called youth culture. They are also making, very quietly, enormous profits for their publishers through advertising. Record companies and book publishers have found the underground press a most effective primer for ads that appeal to such drives as sex or aggression.

*Perceptual Defenses:* Of all the areas of human behavior that have been affected by subliminal stimuli in the mass media, perceptual defenses are perhaps the most critical for the reader to understand clearly. Indeed, most individuals do not realize their nervous systems and brains contain mechanisms which will defend them against anxiety-producing information by simply helping them not to perceive consciously the information. In other words, humans can easily—and perhaps they must in order to adjust and survive—shut out from their conscious awareness any information which might deeply trouble or shock them.

The area of perceptual defense is so important an aspect of the subliminal perception phenomenon as to justify a general discussion in an entire chapter. It was through an understanding of perceptual defense mechanisms that media and its advertisers learned to manipulate their audiences subliminally.

### 3. Perceptual Defenses Hide Meanings in the Service of Subliminal Manipulation

Perceptual defense mechanisms within the human brain and nervous system provide one of the most curious and significant explanations of subliminal response behavior available.

Experiments have demonstrated that humans can receive, process, and transmit information which makes no conscious appearance at any stage of its passage through their nervous system. Indeed, the *unconscious* can operate quite independently from the *conscious* mechanism in the brain. The two perceptual systems often appear to be operating in opposition to one another.

It has already been stated that perceptions that somehow threaten the individual, or that he finds difficult to consciously handle, are subject to being sidetracked from the conscious into the unconscious. Humans defend themselves in this way from perceptual damage which might result if this inhibitory mechanism did not operate.

There are several techniques we use to protect ourselves from perceptual damage:

**Repression:** Considered the central mechanism of perceptual defense, repression is probably the most significant technique by which humans avoid dealing with reality. This would generally involve the barring or censoring of memories, feelings, or perceptions with high anxiety-producing potential. The repression mechanism will be dealt with later in considerable detail.

**Isolation:** The avoidance of perceiving or recalling link-ups of related information through associations or identifications which might arouse anxiety is a commonly used perceptual defense. One dramatic illustration of the technique

recently observed involved a military briefing by a general who for two hours discussed nuclear strike capabilities of the Strategic Air Command. Not once did the heavily decorated officer use words or symbols which might have permitted his audience to link nuclear bombs with millions of burned and vaporized human beings. The incredible assortment of euphemisms included such technical slide-rule-associated symbols as "overpressures," "blast parameters," "temperature thresholds," and "fallout interfaces."

**Regression:** A common defense against anxiety occurs when an individual regresses to an earlier stage in his life where he was secure and someone else assumed responsibility for him. Regression can usually be anticipated among those going through a serious illness. Indeed, the defense is often useful to physicians and hospital staffs by helping a patient submit quietly to the necessary control and management of his illness.

**Fantasy Formation:** A major defense often used by both children and adults, fantasy formation can—in mass media—become part of isolation. This could and perhaps often does result in a situation where fantasy and reality are indistinguishable. Fantasies, for example, of "Bonanza's" Cartwright family applied unconsciously to the real-life intricacies of family relationships can invite disaster.

**Sublimation:** Sublimation is the redirection of drives and emotions into more acceptable channels. Sex drives, for example, may be redirected into more socially acceptable channels such as athletics. The creation of busy work for men enduring a space flight as a technique of maintaining a healthy emotional environment by avoiding anxiety is another illustration of sublimation.

**Denial:** An often utilized defense is to merely deny the existence of something disturbing, such as aggression or sexuality. Denial often offers a release from responsibility through a projection of blame onto another person.

**Projection:** As a perceptual defense, projection concerns the transfer to someone else of feelings or wishes that are unacceptable or anxiety-producing.

**Introjection:** As opposed to projection, introjection relates to the defense against disillusionment in another by accepting blame or responsibility. The aggression or hostility, for example, might be self-directed rather than aimed toward someone else.

It is often not easy to differentiate among the above per-

ceptual defenses. They can interrelate or overlap in many different patterns. For the purposes of media study, however, repression will here constitute the major preoccupation—even though the other defenses are frequently implied within repression.

Perhaps the American Negro writer Eldridge Cleaver defined the media game well when he described the new American revolution as the blacks fighting *oppression*, while the whites are fighting *repression*. It took American blacks, according to Cleaver, a long time to comprehend the magnitude of their own repressions. They simply couldn't bring themselves to believe what was being done to them by whites was really happening. But, much worse, the white man still doesn't know what he has done to the blacks.

### *Consciousness Cleansing*

*Playboy* magazine recently ran a two-page subscription advertisement (see Figure 30) which pictured a large wreath and a rather bosomy blonde, kneeling and tying a ribbon to the wreath. Of a hundred or so young male test subjects who had carefully read the 260 pages of this issue, over 95 percent recalled the ad. Over 70 percent specifically remembered the wreath, but could provide only vague ideas about the blonde's description. Over 40 percent of those who recalled the ad were not even certain she was a blonde.

It seemed strange that two pages out of 260 could have made such a strong recall impression. None of the test subjects had the slightest idea why they were able to remember the ad. Only about 5 percent had actually read the textual copy in the ad. A few of these admitted an interest in subscribing to *Playboy* by sending in the coupon. The remaining 95 percent reported they had merely glanced at the wreath and the girl before turning the page. But, they all remembered the wreath.

A careful look at the subscription ad reveals why the information was repressed. The reader need only ask what kind of flowers were used for the wreath. The first conscious perceptual defense is to see the wreath flowers as nuts—possibly walnuts. A more careful examination reveals they cannot be nuts. This wreath has been cleverly constructed of objects which resemble vaginas and the heads of erect penises. One way of assuring the repression of information into a subliminal stimulus is to make it so outrageous or threatening

that no one would believe a famous, high-credibility, nationally distributed magazine would do such a thing.

*Playboy* is purchased by young men with a median age of 24.5. The wreath is composed of genitals which subliminally communicate with and motivate these young men to forward a subscription check. The bosomy blonde in this case was only a consciously perceived prop for the subliminal content.

All humans have this curious capacity to block out from the conscious awareness information which conflicts with their conscious value systems. The repressed information is capable of evoking feelings or desires or attention without one's conscious awareness of what is happening. Repression seems to occur when ideas involved in the communication may threaten an individual's ego.

The phenomenon can be illustrated with a small, inexpensive copy of the famous sculpture "The Three Graces" (see Figure 2). The actual sculpture—excavated near Cyrene, Lybia—is now displayed in the British Museum. It was created between 500 and 300 B.C. by a sculptor of the Greek Dionysian Cult. Millions of these reproductions have been sold to tourists throughout the Mediterranean area. They are often available in North American gift shops.

A 12-inch-high reproduction of the statue was shown to over 500 test subjects at a North American university. A brief historical description, similar to that above, was given. They were encouraged to handle the sculpture individually, look at it from all sides, and feel it before passing it on.

After each person had carefully observed and handled the statue, the work was removed from the room. Each subject was then asked three questions: "How did the statue make you feel?" "Do you recall anything about the hands?" "What does the statue mean?"

The answers were startling.

A casual examination of "The Three Graces" indicates three nude women in an affectionate embrace. Every line designed by the sculptor into the masterpiece leads the eye to one singular detail—the girl on the left has her hand lovingly upon the right breast of the girl in the center. The visual lines of the arms and robe all lead the eye toward this detail. It is impossible to look at this statue without the eye ending up on the hand covering the breast. Other details, consciously obvious when they are explained, reinforce the meaning of the statue.

The girl on the right is affectionately pressing the center

girl's head against her own. Her right breast is pressed against the outside of the hand on the breast. There are hidden body contacts of breasts against torso on the left and right figures. Hidden anatomical details play an important role in art. The mind unconsciously, apparently, assimilates and structures unseen portions of the anatomy in a search for meaning. A sculpture's deeper meaning is often communicated through what is not seen but is logically there, the perception passing only into the viewer's unconscious. This technique is often utilized in modern mass media, especially in such illustrations as the *Playboy* centerfold.

The meaning of the statue is obvious and simple. The sculpture is portraying a homosexual love relationship among three women—not at all an unacceptable notion to a Dionysian Greek. If the sculpture was considered as time-stopped at a particular instant in a process of events, implying a before and after, the three women have probably just left their bath, were drying each other with the towel, and were distracted by their mutual affection. If one were to ask what they would likely be doing ten minutes after that moment, a reasonable answer would be a three-way homosexual experience.

Of the 500 test subjects, only 9 percent answered the questions in any way which suggested they had an idea of what was going on in the sculpture. This appeared strange, as the information content of the statue is not at all subtle. An additional 33 percent were able to describe the hand-on-breast detail, but in their descriptions they did not evaluate the meaning of the detail: they simply saw it, but consciously ascribed no meaning to it. Sixty percent of the test subjects had no conscious idea whatsoever of what was meant by the sculpture.

Their answers to the three questions were all very similar. The statue made them feel there was a warm, beautiful, affectionate feeling among the three women. A number of comments suggested that a feeling of sadness was projected. Responses in regard to *meaning* were universally vague, most often repeating the answers to the first question. Whatever the statue meant at the conscious level was, apparently, beyond the test subject's ability to verbalize.

Some of the individual responses were interesting. Two dozen subjects stated they had a copy of the statue in their homes. Several had purchased them as souvenirs in Europe. One stated her brother had brought the statue home, and

she had often wished "he would throw that cheap tourist junk out of the house." None of the subjects who had had contact with the statue was consciously aware of the obvious sexual implications. Another girl admitted to purchasing the statue in Athens and keeping it on her dresser for nearly a year before she noticed the hand on the breast. She admitted not ever being consciously aware of any deeper meaning implied by the affectionate caress. A large number of the subjects used the term "art," implying that art has no specific meaning. Curiously, once the label "art" was applied to the statue, the label appeared to impede—like a stone wall—any further insights into the feelings or meanings projected by the statue.

Incredible as it may appear, it is most likely that hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people have viewed "The Three Graces" without ever actually consciously perceiving its meaning. Only a minuscule proportion appear to have penetrated into the theme of the masterpiece, even though they absolutely had to see the hand-on-breast detail. The brain, however, does not always consciously register what the eye sees.

### *Knowing as Deception*

The implications of the repression mechanism are fascinating in the field of art and in the field of mass communication. If humans repress the meaning of such a simple and beautiful masterpiece as "The Three Graces," how much of the reality of the world surrounding them is also repressed? These repressed perceptions appear to influence individuals through the unconscious rather than the conscious mechanism of their minds.

Consider the supposed factual news reports on an international crisis, conference, or what have you. How much information, one might well wonder, is repressed into the unconscious? The observation has been made by many theorists that what is not consciously perceived might well be consistently more important than what *is* perceived. When the information exclusion concept is turned upon the mass media, a curious paradox appears when content is interpreted in terms of what was left out instead of what was put in. This inverse approach to media analysis provides an analytical perspective that may help us understand the published content of North American newspapers.

The perceptual defense mechanism of repression, which appears to control conscious memory, may well turn out to be the key in explaining many heretofore enigmatic aspects of human behavior. Intelligence, for example, which is determined by tests that supposedly measure what we have in our memories, are based only upon abilities to consciously recall, reason, think abstractly, make relationships, apply principles, and respond quickly to timed exercises. If the totality of perception registers instantly in the human brain, then it is actually the perceptual defense repression mechanism that may determine our intelligence by regulating what is admitted from the unconscious into consciousness at any particular time in our lives.

The concept of intelligence as it relates to memory, for example, is predicated upon a major North American industry which sells tests. This industry actually establishes cultural norms by labeling children early in life as *superior*, *average*, or *slow learner*. Intelligence tests have been known to be scientifically worthless ever since the first one was invented as an experimental laboratory device: First, the entire concept of "intelligence" is hopelessly ambiguous, based purely upon the simplistic concept of conscious memory—comparable again to studying an iceberg only from what protrudes above the surface. Second, intelligence, whatever it may eventually turn out to be, is hopelessly culture-bound—limited by group identifications and hidden meanings, producing over an extended period of time individuals with vaguely similar repression patterns. In other words, intelligence could more reasonably consist of what is repressed from consciousness rather than what has merely been left within consciousness. No intelligence test can cross cultures, in this sense, and any major city will include dozens of definable (and doubtless many undefinable) subcultures.

Nevertheless, the definitions we accept for "intelligence" serve administrative and social motives in behalf of various power structures. People can be almost automatically channeled in and out of various occupations or groups, even religions, in an often destructive—though economically efficient—manner. We serve our own self-flattering image by categorizing easily the *more* or *less* intelligent, usually using our concept of an average person (ourselves, of course) as the reference point.

Learning a language is the single most complex task any human could undertake in terms of innate intelligence—if

there were such a thing. The vast majority of individuals in any society learn some language, many of them far more complex in syntax and meaning than culturally repressed middle-class English. The profanity-saturated language of the ghetto is far richer in information yield and subtleties of meaning than the formal one-dimensional phrases of most experimental psychologists. In fact, the Ph. D. may—with his multisyllable words, complex qualified syntax, and pedestrian linear logic—be practicing a far more limited and intellectually more primitive form of communication than does the ghetto resident with his rich and symbolically meaningful vocabulary of four-letter words.

Another way of viewing perceptual defenses was suggested in a curious approach to language studies—and what is repressed or left out of language at the conscious level—initiated by Professor E. H. Sturtevant some years ago at Yale University. Sturtevant proceeded upon the assumption that the real motive behind the evolutionary development of language could just as well have been to develop a system of symbols based upon *deception* rather than *truthful* information—in the service of survival and adjustment. In both the plant and animal worlds, deceptive communication behavior is not at all unusual. Deception, in fact, may be the norm. This does not necessarily suggest that man's lies or deceptions are consciously malicious. Indeed, man must first repress his real motives and lie to himself before he can effectively deceive others.

Many species of fish, animals, and plants have evolved complex communication systems sustaining their survival. One tropical species, the *chaetodon capistratus*, or four-eyed butterfly fish, carries a large eye on its tail which deceives larger fish as to its size and suitability for easy conquest.

In what is often discussed as the most thorough *con* job occurring in nature, one species of orchid—*cryptosybia*—depends upon a small unique fly to carry its pollen to other orchids. The orchid emits an aromatic very similar to that of the female fly while in heat, and its pistil has a texture similar to the mating surface of the female fly's body. Upon landing, the male fly thrashes about upon the orchid's garden of delight, in the process covering himself with the orchid's pollen. During the busy sex life of the male fly, a dozen orchids a day might be pollinated. Had the symbiotic re-

lationship not developed through centuries of evolution, the orchid species would have probably disappeared.

There are hundreds of such known phenomena in nature involving some form of communication—virtually all of them interspecies survival techniques based upon some kind of deception. Man appears to be the only species of life which uses intraspecific deception as a basic mode of communication, deceiving his own kind.

Several years ago, at one of the interminable—and most usually ill-fated—conferences on international peace, speaker after speaker bemoaned the turgid history of ineffective communication between the United States and the Soviet Union. During the entire afternoon "lack of communication" and "real understanding" between the two countries was blamed for their inability to agree even on the time of day. Finally, late in the afternoon, a senior and very distinguished American diplomat took his turn on the speakers' platform. He threw away a long, prepared text, and simply said with a voice betraying his exhaustion, "Ladies and Gentlemen, we have always known exactly what the Russians want. The Russians have always known exactly what we want. The problem is that both of us frequently want the same thing. Our communications are simply designed to prevent each other from obtaining our respective objectives. They know this and we know this. Further, they know we know they know and we know they know we know. We simply understand each other perfectly."

### *Theories of the Unconscious*

There has been an enormous literature in psychology over the past half century theorizing on the role of the unconscious in the life of each human. Nevertheless, the unconscious remained only an abstract theory until 1957, when Canadian neurosurgeon Dr. Wilder Penfield empirically demonstrated the existence of the unconscious mechanism in the human brain. During brain surgery, while their cerebral cortex (the outer layer of the brain) was being probed, Penfield's patients recalled events, scenes, sounds, aromas, and other perceptions which had been long buried and consciously forgotten. This was probably the first empirical demonstration of a specific mechanism in the brain which illustrated what theorists had been arguing about since and even before

Freud. The unconscious had become a medical or "scientific" reality, though far from a well-understood one.

Prior to Penfield's work, hypnosis was the only other empirical technique which could penetrate perceptual defenses and which clearly demonstrated the existence of the unconscious mechanism. Among many medical men hypnosis is still suspect. Virtually none of the medical schools in North America will tolerate serious discussion of hypnosis—even though most patients can be totally anesthetized by hypnosis. Other nations, such as the Soviet Union, have made substantial medical and scientific progress through the study, experimentation with, and application of hypnosis, and it is still the most easily available form of communication with the unconscious.

Theories of the unconscious suggest that it actually dominates human behavior, controlling motivations, value systems, interpersonal relationships, personal identities, and, in effect, all major and minor aspects of life which differentiate humans from animals. Conscious or cognitive perception is viewed by many as peripheral and superficial to perception at the unconscious level. Conscious functions primarily support the ego—individual and group pretensions, perspectives toward ourselves and the world we would like to see, as compared with the world as it may actually exist.

This view of man as being dominated by a mechanism within his mind of which he has no conscious knowledge is to many a frightening attack upon the ego. Anyone who inadvertently probes into unconscious perceptions or motives may wind up ridiculed by an outraged, self-righteous mob. A large portion of North American psychologists today refuse to concede the existence of the unconscious—even though psychology was first established to deal with subliminal phenomena.

### *Are Images Real?*

The popular euphemism *image* is merely a positive way of describing a stereotype. The ways in which images are pieced together by the unconscious mind is curious.

In advertising recall studies, for example, advertisements are rarely or never recalled by the conscious mind. Any ad that can be recalled by a significant number of readers is of doubtful value. The conscious mind values, differentiates, and makes judgments. Conscious ad recall can subject an ad to

*critical judgment*—the last thing to which any advertiser wants to expose his product. Ads are designed to implant themselves within the unconscious where they will lie dormant uncriticized, unevaluated, and unknown to the individual until the time a purchase decision is required. The buried information then surfaces as a favorable attitudinal predisposition. This phenomenon can produce some interesting and complicated situations.

In a nationwide public relations study of seven giant chemical producers in the United States, a research organization discovered curious insights as to the images people held of corporations. Each of the seven corporations are vast industrial and commercial empires—Du Pont, Monsanto, American Cyanamid, Dow, Olin Mathieson, Allied Chemical, and Union Carbide. Even the individual presidents of any of these empires would be hard-pressed to enumerate offhand the staggering number of products produced annually by their companies.

The survey was conducted among a sample of several hundred corporate presidents and executive vice-presidents, whose companies were heavy users of chemical products and who each had long-term experience as major industrial customers for chemical products. During the more than one-hour depth interview, few of these executives recalled specifically any advertising by the giant chemical corporations. Of the few who believed they could recall either institutional or product advertising in magazines, newspapers, television, or radio, most of their recollections proved to be in error.

A large number of executives, when asked to describe the Olin Mathieson Corporation—a vast international complex of chemical companies, as a person—described OM as an elderly, thin, wizened man with a sharp face and balding head. He wore a stiff, heavy wool suit, a thin celluloid collar, and high-laced shoes. He was shrewd and untrustworthy, tight with money, and feared and hated by his subordinates. This image of Olin Mathieson was described quite frequently, often in elaborate detail, by executives from all over the United States.

This strongly negative image of OM appeared inexplicable. The researchers could not understand how an organization as large and complex as Olin Mathieson could have acquired such a consistently negative image. Its advertising revealed dignified and interesting institutional magazine ads as well as

generous support for public service television programming during the preceding five years.

Finally, and quite by accident, one executive was discovered who in his youth had actually worked for Olin Mathieson. He recalled an OM senior executive of some thirty years earlier who fit the description that had developed in the research. The OM executive had been dead for over a quarter century—dead but apparently not forgotten in the unconscious memories of the executives who, because of their age and work experience, had probably had dealings with him during their youth. A recheck of the executives who described OM in this negative image revealed that none consciously recalled the actual executive. None could even identify the man's name.

The Monsanto image was also unusual for a giant conglomerate corporation. A significant proportion of executives described Monsanto as a beautiful, sexually provocative woman. She was blonde, in her late twenties, of medium height, thin, very well proportioned, cultured and well educated, and probably married to a high-ranking corporate executive. She was clothed in a low-cut, strapless evening gown of metallic appearing fabric which fitted her very tightly but was in "good taste." Several of the descriptions of the blonde were quite erotic.

The researchers began to wonder how anyone—especially these hard-nosed executive types—could see a giant corporation in sexually oriented terms. A review of Monsanto's advertising over several preceding years supplied the answer. Two years before the study Monsanto had run full-page, four-color advertisements in national magazines such as *Life*, *Fortune*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *U.S. News and World Report*. The ads were institution-oriented toward Monsanto's plastics division. Standing gracefully in the layout of each advertisement was the beautiful blonde dressed in her strapless gown of metallic-appearing material made from a synthetic fiber developed by Monsanto. A recheck of those executives who thought of Monsanto in these erotic terms revealed that none could consciously recall ever having seen the plastics division advertising—even after it was described in detail for them.

The study was sponsored by one of the major chemical companies. In terms of corporate competitive strategies, once the client corporation understood the intimate details of his competitors' as well as his own image, he was in a position

to exploit the strengths and weaknesses of these images to his advantage. There is a measure of honesty in the competitive system, however, in that each of the seven corporations can utilize similar competitive strategies based upon similar research into their public images.

### *Maximal Meaning in Minimal Space and Time*

Words are carefully structured and lineal. In English they read from left to right, one line at a time. Different lineal patterns appear in Hebrew and Chinese. The reader has been carefully trained to consciously cope with verbal symbolism—organizing, categorizing, assimilating, and finally formulating a complex of meaning.

Lineally perceived words, as we have been trained to slowly grope our way through the jungles of syntax and paragraphs, impose severe limitations upon the quantity of words we can ingest during a given period of time. An average person reads at roughly 400 words per minute. Training in lineal techniques of rapid reading can increase the speed to, perhaps, 1,200 words per minute. Writers and editors work to achieve simple syntactical structures with verbs and nouns rich in symbolic, often archetypal, meaning to increase the information load and reader assimilation rate to maximum.

However, there is a fixed limit to what most people can handle. Western society has been oriented, through traditional language training, to handle words in this slow, pedestrian, lineal manner. Some interesting experiments are now being conducted in which people are successfully taught to read at rates as high as 10,000 words, or as much as 50 pages, per minute. Incredible as it may seem, several hundred nine-to-twelve-year-old children have already been taught to read, comprehend, and retain information from reading at what to most of us would be a bewildering speed. This new approach appears to be based upon a utilization of instantaneous perception similar to that normally used for nonverbal visual stimuli. Scholars have long known that visual perception operates through neurons connecting the eye and brain, at a speed of 60 to 100 meters per second. In other words, the eye perceives a stimulus, say a photograph, instantaneously encoding and processing the content through highly complex neural structures in the brain's cerebral cortex.

At the unconscious level, every minute detail in a photo-

graph is recorded instantly within the brain. Conscious perception apparently works more slowly. With pictorial stimuli, conscious perception follows focal points in the picture as the eye is led from one major detail to another. If the picture has been professionally designed, the eye will cover most major details within a second or two.

The fovea, an area smaller than a pinhead located near the center of the eye's retina, appears to be the major source of consciously induced visual information. The perceived image upon the fovea rapidly jumps from point to point, operating at millisecond speeds. Once it is targeted toward a specific point, it cannot change its path of movement, or *saccade*, as the path is sometimes called. When a subject is difficult to consciously identify, the fovea fixations are longer and the fovea image will jump back to the subject again and again, moving as rapidly as 500 degrees per second.

Looking at any example of art or advertising, the movements of the image upon the fovea are relatively easy to determine. Upon first viewing the picture, the eye mechanism will move toward a specific point. This has been referred to as the primary focal point, designed by the artist as the specific location where conscious perception of the picture begins. The fovea image will then move from point to point in a succession of rapid jumps as the ad is scanned. Artists can predict how most viewers' eyes will move; the fovea image jumps toward anything novel or emotionally stimulating. In viewing commercial art, there would be great similarity in the fovea paths followed by most individuals as they scan the advertisement.

During the one or two seconds in which most print advertising is designed to be perceived, the fovea may race through a dozen or more focal points. Information perceived at these points is transmitted into consciousness. Humans are apparently aware of what they have seen via the fovea. The fovea, and its saccades across a wide variety of visual stimuli, has been studied exhaustively with the Mackworth motion picture camera—a two-camera device with one camera focused upon the magnified image of the retina and fovea, the other focused upon the scene in front of the viewer.

The fovea, however, collects only a small portion of the totally available information. Not more than 1/1000th of the visual field can be seen in hard focus at a time. Even if the fovea jumps to a hundred different focal points on a

painting—far in excess of the usual jumps made while observing an average advertisement—only 10 percent of the total visual information would be perceived.

What appears to be happening, however, is that the total, instantaneous perception of the picture is repressed in favor of certain obvious details. *All the information and meaning are recorded instantly and totally*, but the mind plays what amounts to a trick, permitting only certain details—often what we want to see or what we can identify with—to filter through into conscious awareness. This could be the mechanism by which the brain enables us to survive the vast totality of data passing each day through our sensory inputs into storage areas within the brain. Humans simply cannot consciously handle all this information. Consciousness, therefore, appears to be a limiting facility of the nervous system.

The brain's storage capacity has been estimated at some 20 billion units of information, only a small part of which is used during the course of a lifetime. Only a small portion of total stored data even filters through into levels of consciousness. In fact, perceptual defense mechanisms may be vital to human survival. We repress because we must repress or endanger sanity and survival.

Once a total page of words is perceived and recorded in the unconscious, the problem is then one of moving the meaning into a level of consciousness.

Total visual perception is not limited to what is perceived via the fovea. The retina transmits the total picture perceived into the brain; this process is sometimes referred to as peripheral vision. Though individuals can be trained to become more consciously aware of their total perceptual content—such as in rapid reading, memorization techniques, or in eideticism (photographic memory) with or without hypnosis—peripherally perceived information is generally routed into the unconscious. Precisely how this mechanism works is unknown, and may never be fully understood. This brief theoretical outline, nevertheless, is generally supported by research in both neurology and psychology.

Thus, most of the meanings applied consciously have really been interpreted by our brains from data in both the conscious and unconscious mechanisms. Greater significance and meaning are derived, apparently, from the unconscious—from the enormous quantity of subliminal information

stored and available since our moment of birth, possibly even before. The argument over whether information, ideas, archetypes, or concepts are genetically inherited is still far from a settled issue.

Maximum meaning in minimum time and space is the basic theorem of the mass media in America—and not just casual meaning either, but meaning that will sell media and the advertised products of American industry through which media are sustained.

### *The Unconsciousness's Photographic Memory*

Studies recently undertaken at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology lend strong support to the concept of total, instantaneous perception of even tens of thousands of tiny dots of information, edited within the brain, into conscious and unconscious storage. Using a new technique developed with the Bell Laboratories, subjects were tested with slides containing random dot stereograms—pictures appearing to have depth. The scientists discovered that certain individuals have seemingly incredible memory abilities.

Eidetic images are memory pictures of past events wherein total scenes appear to individuals, complete down to the smallest detail. The mental picture allows the subject to examine every detail, and may last several minutes. There is substantial evidence to suggest that eidetic images of virtually every event since birth, as we perceived it happening, are stored in the brain. The phenomenon has often been recorded during hypnotic regressions and various meditational practices. Certain individuals appear to have greater conscious access to the images than others, particularly children.

In the experiments, each individual stereogram slide presented only a random series of dots—with no specific meaning apparent. But together, one superimposed on top of the other, the slides formed a stereogram with the dots combined to form letters, words, or meaningful symbols.

The scientists exposed one of the stereogram slides to the left eye during one time interval. Later, the other stereogram was shown to the right eye of test subjects. They delayed the right eye exposure for increasing time periods. Results were staggering in their implications.

Test subjects, in order to play the game, had to remember the dots, their numbers and positions, in the first slide and then match this memory later with the second slide. The

task required them to remember—either consciously or unconsciously—the exact number and position of thousands of dots.

Eidetic image stereograms, with ten thousand dots, were recalled over time periods as long as three days. Million-dot patterns were recalled for as long as four hours.

After viewing the second stereoscope slide, eidetic test subjects required about ten seconds to make their evaluations. The recognition time period is similar to that involved with much subliminal phenomena; it usually requires about ten seconds for anyone to consciously perceive subliminally embedded words in advertisements. This ten-second period seems to relate closely to an individual's state of relaxation. The recognition period, however, only involves conscious perception—an individual's conscious sensitivity to subliminal stimuli. Perception appears to be instantaneous and total, or very near to total, at the unconscious level. An individual who wants to utilize a greater part of his brain-stored information must simply learn how to move information from the unconscious into the conscious level of cognition.

Amazing individual memory feats have been recorded in history. The Shass Pollaks, Hebrew scholars, could accurately memorize which word appeared in which position on every page in each of the twelve volumes of the Babylonian Talmud. A. R. Luria described the eidetic journeys mnemonists, or memory specialists, took to reconstruct very complicated lists of materials. The Bell Lab scientists reported that one of their test subjects, a young woman, could recall pages of poetry in a known foreign language which she could copy from bottom line to the top line as fast as her hand could write.

There is no known relationship between this type of memory ability and intelligence as evaluated by the various standard tests. Popular mythology suggests, nevertheless, that anyone who can recall so prodigiously must possess a very special kind of intelligence. This does not appear to be true. In studies with hypnosis, virtually anyone who can be led into a deep trance can be regressed to some earlier point in his life and experience eidetic images in minute detail. There appears a strong implication that most humans have eidetic abilities unavailable to their conscious minds, but which appear in a hypnotic trance.

Experiments with hypnosis, the rapid reading techniques, dot stereograms, and mnemonists suggest that perhaps the

key to using the natural capacities (both conscious and unconscious) of the brain and nervous system is to circumvent the repression or control systems which hold down perceptive capabilities, channeling the tightly directing consciousness along certain socially approved avenues or sets. In other words, intelligence in all its complex manifestations appears not to be something you either have or do not have—but more likely to be innate in most everyone and controlled by the degrees of repression or other perceptual defenses developed during childhood.

Indeed, what we have come to accept as measurable intelligence may actually only be a limited index of materials which have filtered through the screen of repression into consciousness—a small drop in an ocean of stored experience. The socialization and education processes of Western economically developed nations may, in effect, be limiting man's intelligence by forcing him to repress greater and greater amounts of what he actually perceives.

The implications to mankind are enormous. If individuals have innate neurological abilities vastly beyond their apparent conscious levels, the entire history of intellectual evolution must be reviewed to seek out society's hidden motives or needs to control which have solidly erected social, educational, economic, religious, and linguistic systems which act as barriers to human growth and self-realization.

### *Symbolization Abilities*

Suzan Langer, the American philosopher, believed man has a basic emotional need, instinct, or drive to make symbols—a drive comparable to hunger, thirst, sex, or survival. Other writers have considered man's symbolizing ability as the primary basis for his differentiation from animals, as the only way the past can be related to the present and the future, and as the glue which has held together cultures, religions, societies, and families. Science and technology, in a twentieth-century context, are based upon exercises in symbol-making which have not liberated man from symbolic quagmires but embedded him more deeply into dependence upon symbols and what he believes they either *mean* or *don't mean*.

Archetypal symbolism, specifically, refers to symbols that have appeared in many places, at many times, with an inexplicable similarity of meaning. These archetypes are found

in religious rituals, folklore, fairy tales, mythologies, and in dreams. Carl Jung, the Swiss psychoanalyst, believed these symbols stemmed from images already present within all men in the turbulent depths of the unconscious. Jung, Levi-Strauss, and many other scholars have theorized that our so-called modern ways of thinking at the conscious level are quite different from the primitive thought processes of our early ancestors. These differences primarily consist of consciously derived information, including technologies, education or training, and complex systems of socialization.

At the unconscious level, however, man is thought to have remained essentially as he was during the Upper Paleolithic or late Stone Age. The unconscious perpetually flows into man's consciousness through visions, dreams, fantasies, and myths—providing a base of meaning from which to consciously interpret the world of reality.

Taking the concept from St. Augustine, Jung applied the word archetype to define universal symbols which sustain a constant meaning and efficiency in their applications. He maintained that archetypes were not genetically inherited, but represented a hereditary disposition of man to produce parallel images out of very similar common psychic structures. He referred to this ability of man as the *collective unconscious*. In other words, Jung theorized that the conscious mind displays incalculable differences or variation between individuals, cultures, and groups in its day-to-day functions; the unconscious, on the other hand, displays very strong similarities, expressed through the collective unconscious as symbolic archetypes.

Jung further defined archetypes as systems involving both images and emotions inherited with the brain structure. They are, in Jung's theory, the source of the most powerful instinctive prejudices, as well as support for instinctive adaptations. Freud called these archetypes *primitive fantasies*.

Archetypes have also been described as "all-embracing parables," with only partially accessible meanings. They, in any respect, are a type of symbol with a much more profound and deeper meaning and significance to human behavior.

Practical examples of archetypal symbolism used in modern advertising include such images as the genitalia (phallic and vaginal symbolism discussed later in this chapter), the moon, the family, love, water, birth, rebirth, fire, sun—the list is almost endless. Specific symbols related closely to these

archetypal concepts would likely elicit similar responses among both modern and primitive man—in terms of meaning at the unconscious level.

### *Everything's Symbolic, Functional, or Both*

Everything perceived by humans can be considered either symbolic, functional, or both. Symbolic meaning operates within the unconscious either verbally or nonverbally. Symbols involve what an object or situation *means* to us, rather than what it might *say* to us. Symbolic meanings appear to form the basis upon which perception becomes deeply meaningful. A differentiation between signs, signals, and symbols can be briefly developed here for the purpose of explaining conscious versus unconscious phenomena.

A consciously perceived flag, for example, could be termed a *sign* denoting a particular nation. At the conscious or intellectual level we identify the flag *sign* with a large and complex reality—each in our own distinctive way. A storm flag beneath the national flag might be termed a *signal*, denoting an event shortly to come. Similarly, a stoplight signals that traffic will shortly cross in front of us. Again, however, signals are perceived at the level of consciousness and are intellectualized inputs into our nervous systems. Both the sign and the signal have unconscious implications, but function primarily at the level of conscious discrimination.

The emotional meaning of the U.S. flag's stars and stripes is symbolic. A portion of the symbolic meaning is conscious, but as with the iceberg, the largest and most meaningful portion lies beneath the level of consciousness. Unconsciously, the stars and stripes could symbolize security, clan dominance, self-sacrifice, loyalty to the ideals of a parental figure, and so on. Significant symbols are culturally determined, condensed ideas which neglect the emotionally unimportant and exaggerated characteristics that are important to individuals. Symbolic indoctrination is believed to begin in early childhood. Several theorists maintain that certain archetypal symbolic meanings are inherent within the human brain.

### *Love and Death in American Media*

Symbols, in this sense, appear throughout history and focus upon two dimensions of life common to all peoples, from New Guinea's to Manhattan's jungles. These symbolic

common denominators of all the world's known cultures are organized around two polarities of life: first the origin of life, procreation, love, or—in the *Playboy* vulgarization—sex; and second, the end of life, death, and its related implications of aggression and violence. These two symbolic polarities, sex or love and death, lie deep at the root of all the world's literature, art, philosophy, science, religion, and human behavior.

"The most strictly tabooed areas of human experience in our Western culture," wrote Dr. Thass-Thienemann, "are those that reveal the negative aspect of life: the separation from the mother, the separation from the body, and the final separation from life which is death."<sup>1</sup>

In the mass media of communication, the preoccupation with love and death symbolism is apparent in every newspaper, magazine, and television program. Genital symbolism is universally used in the media, though rarely recognized by the audience as such. Commonly used phallic symbolism includes neckties, arrows, flagpoles, automobiles, rockets, pencils, cigars and cigarettes, candles, broomsticks, snakes, trees, cannons, pens—the list is endless. Vaginal symbols are developed from virtually any round or elliptical shape—lips, eyes, belt buckles, the oval feminine face surrounded by hair, apples, pears, oranges, cherries, balls, eggs—again, the list is extensive.

The union of male and female symbols can also be represented by a key inserted into a lock, a nut being screwed on a bolt, a beer glass foaming at the top as it is being filled from a bottle—there is no end to the possibilities.

Death symbolism in the mass media also offers limitless, though depressing, potentialities—wars, police actions, nationalistic and patriotic totems, religious guilt and fear, athletic contests (which involve the symbolic defeat or killing of one side). The instruments of dominance are symbolic of the genital origin of life—bats, balls, hockey sticks, pucks, and the like, aggressive and violent acts of a thousand different varieties against both people and their property or territories. Death symbolism in North America somehow dominates what we call news, information, education, as well as much of what is usually described as entertainment, from TV drama to the so-called funny books.

<sup>1</sup>Theodore Thass-Thieneman, *The Subconscious Language* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968).

Americans' clumsy and self-conscious attempts to produce sex education films for use in public schools, for example, have generally been shattering failures. The symbolism underlying the meaning of this visual instruction material relates more to death than the origin of life—mechanical functions of the internal organs in simple cause-and-effect analogies (like insights into bodily functions provided by aspirin television commercials), hospitals, doctors, authority figures, guilt, shame. Curiously, this sex education material de-emphasizes the whole subject of love and emotional needs in favor of stated or implied threats against anyone who transgresses against conventional morality.

In the highly ritualized television or movie potboiler the hero can find love, sex, or what have you with the heroine only after a ritual enactment of violence and aggression, usually during which someone must die, often many. The symbolic use of sado-masochistic themes is an integral part of much North American media content—though well hidden symbolically so as to find its major appeal only at the level of the unconscious. Death, or the fear of death, underlies virtually all of the symbols of state, authority, governments, political parties, and military, commercial, and social institutions.

### Archetypes

The love-death symbolism in common everyday use within the media has archetypal characteristics. The meanings of archetypal symbolism have persisted for centuries. Similar archetypal meanings appear often in primitive cultures known to have had no physical contact with each other. The phallic symbols of pre-Hispanic American cultures such as the Mayan or Toltec appeared also in medieval art, and can be found today in the pages of modern magazines such as *Playboy*.

Man apparently has an innate *need* to symbolize, a need he is almost totally unaware exists. The symbol-making function has been described as a primary human activity like loving, eating, looking, or moving about. Indeed, human symbolizing—the manufacturing and searching for symbols and the response to symbols—continues in each human from birth to death and appears to be a fundamental and automatic mind process.

A typical example of the use of archetypal symbolism ap-

peared in an *Esquire* advertisement for Seagram's Extra Dry Gin (see Figure 3). Directed at the *Esquire* reader, median age over 40, upper-middle class, married, with nearly-grown or grown children, the ad uses an orange being peeled as the object to be derived from the phallic bottle of Seagram's. For centuries the orange has symbolized woman—young, ripe, and sexually available. Peeling the orange is symbolic of undressing the woman. The rather simple subliminal message in the ad suggests that you undress the woman or seduce her through the use of Seagram's Gin. Remember, the ad is designed to be read in a matter of one or two seconds. Few readers will read the copy. Even if they do it is most unlikely they will be able to consciously recall the ad even ten minutes after it was perceived.

The strategy is to slip the seduction symbolism into a reader's unconscious. Several weeks later, while in a liquor store, he hopefully will select Seagram's from among its competitors. The reader will never consciously recall the ad. Indeed, at the point of purchase, if questioned as to his brand preferences, he will likely provide elaborate rationalizations for his behavior. "Seagram's," he might say, "has the best taste." As the ad has been repeated dozens of times by Seagram's in national publications, presumably the theory works.

In several contemporary cultures the orange symbolism for women is still at the conscious level. Apparently in America, however, the symbolic relationship has disappeared into the unconscious. In Mexico, for example, the word *naranja* (orange) is often used idiomatically to describe prostitutes. Even in the Soviet Union the orange as a symbol of woman was used recently in a poem by Andrei Andrejevich Voznesensky titled, "Strip Tease."

#### On stage:

There's a dancing girl who strips until she's bare . . .  
Do I rage? . . .  
Or do these strong tears come from the floodlight's  
glare?  
Scarf she takes off, shawl she shakes off, all the shine—  
Tinsel that she peels off like an orange rind.

Symbolic implications in advertising and mass communication are often frightening, especially in terms of North Americans' ego-centered notions of free will. As was said

earlier, the human nervous system is capable of assimilating symbolic content at incredible speeds. Lineal conscious rationalization of content occurs much more slowly. The conscious mind discriminates, decides, evaluates, resists, or accepts. The unconscious, apparently, merely stores units of information, much of which influences attitudes or behavior at the conscious level in ways about which science knows virtually nothing. The mass communication industry long ago realized the resistance to advertising which develops at the conscious level. However, there is little if any resistance encountered at the unconscious level, to which marketing appeals are now directed.

The majority of national advertising and media displays are carefully pretested before being published. After publication, audience reaction to the stimuli is also carefully evaluated against retail store audits, circulation studies, audience research of a dozen varieties, and a plethora of audience-reaction measuring devices and techniques.

#### Archetypal Families

Magazines, television programs, and other media content are often constructed around an archetypal symbolic family concept. Father, mother, and sibling relationships appear symbolically in the most unlikely places. After all, the family has been the basic social survival defense for mankind over thousands of years. The symbolic family archetype is today present in politics, business corporations, military and civil organizations, and virtually any closely integrated group with a collective security need.

In the mass media, however, the family structure is intentionally woven into the commercial fabrics of plot and characterization to ensure audience identification.

The archetypal symbolic family is constructed around four central characters:

*Father:* The political leader who provides government, long-term strategies, direction, and control, and serves as spokesman for the family.

*Mother:* The spiritual leader who provides moral support for all members of the family. In effect, mother serves as a security blanket or crying towel for the group. Her role, in the minds of the other family members, is supportive and sustaining. As a sounding board, she listens to problems and confessions and offers moral encouragement.

*Children:* The archetypal family will contain two children or subordinate citizens. One will symbolically represent the *child/craftsman/artist*, supporting the technical needs of the family. The other will play the role of a *comedian/clown* in the family, supporting needs for humor, entertainment, and pleasure. These symbolic children can be of either sex or of any age.

The psychologically ideal family is common to every society and culture known to have existed. This idealized structure may not exist in reality, considering the high divorce rate and the intermixes of maternal-paternal dominance characteristics. But the symbolically ideal family does exist in the minds of all the world's peoples. Even the communists, who have been at war with the family archetype for half a century as they tried to replace the traditional symbolic structure with one based upon the supremacy of the state, have generally failed to upset the structure.

FAMILY	FATHER/ POLITICIAN	MOTHER/ PRIEST	CHILD/ CRAFTSMAN	CHILD/ CLOWN
Beatles (pre-Sgt. Pepper)	John	Paul	George	Ringo
Mod Squad	Captain Greer	Julie	Link	Peter
Bonanza	Ben Cartwright	Hoss	Little Joe	Candy/Hop Sing
Cosmopolitan	Psychiatrist and Male Authors	Helen Gurley Brown	Female Authors	Ads and Fashion Models
Gunsmoke	Matt	Kitty	Doc	Festus/Chester
Playboy	Hefner and Magazine as a Whole	Cover and Centerfold Surrogate	Male Authors	Cartoons, Ads, Fashion Models
Peanuts	Charlie Brown/ Linus	Lucy	Schroeder	Snoopy
Star Trek	Captain Kirk	Spock	Scott	McCoy/Sulu
Johnny Carson Show	Johnny	Ed McMahon	Guests	Doc Severinsen

The human need to project into or identify with the symbolic family structure is used by writers, directors, and other media technicians as a subliminal device to hold an audience's interest and attention and to effect identification between media content and audience.

When popular media content is analyzed for family structure, the sustaining characters drop neatly into their familial roles.

### Archetypal Families in the News

The list could be endless. Once characterization in the symbolic family has been assigned, however, it is virtually impossible for the characters to change roles. The Beatles were a notable exception to this rule. In the Sgt. Pepper album they did a complete switch of familial roles—the new roles are depicted on the Sgt. Pepper album cover. The record, incidentally, dealt on one side with the fact that life is an illusion and on the other with the necessity for that illusion.

The mother/priest role, of course, can be symbolically assumed by a male actor—though there are definite rules to the game. A symbolically maternal male must assume and maintain a role of asexuality. The character Hoss in "Bonanza" would have never made out with a girl even if the show ran for another fifty years. Spock, in "Star Trek," had to endure a similar fate.

From time to time, in America particularly, strange modifications of the basic family image appear. In an archetypal symbol, *function—not sex—is the primary basis for gender*. Children can be of either sex. Maternal roles can even be portrayed by men. Paternal roles can be assigned to women. In one of the early TV family comedies, "The Nelson Family," the maternal role was designed into the character played by Ozzie Nelson. The father's role was given to Harriet. The children were, of course, portrayed as clown and craftsman.

The archetypal family does not end with fictional dramas on television or motion picture screens. It can be found in news information, it is an integral part of team-sport image development, public events, and even in politics. Is it possible that these archetypes actually exist in reality or that our perception of reality transposes people and events into archetypal meaning structures?

For example, in every manned space flight the astronauts—as they have been represented to the American public by NASA public relations and the various news media—have comprised archetypal families. In every flight there is a father/politician, mother/priest, child/craftsman, and child/clown. In the early days when the flights were manned by one- or two-man crews, individuals in ground-support functions were designed into the family—NASA public relations officers, scientists, engineers, technicians, or newsmen. Both Chet Huntley and Walter Cronkite, and even their staffs, were drafted on occasion to fill the symbolic roles of mothers or children in various space-shot families. This phenomenon is apparently not consciously planned, but appears to evolve naturally from an unconscious awareness of audience expectations. There are some TV directors and writers, however, who will openly admit they consciously structure an archetypal family into a news situation to achieve closer audience identification.

President Nixon and his close White House associates have also been presented as an archetypal family structure through the media. The President, of course, is the father/politician. This brings a question to mind that if you consider the United States a matriarchy—as do many cultural anthropologists—is it possible the American president will one day be compelled to play a mother/priestess role? Secretary of State William Rogers was typed into the mother/priestess archetype. In the Lyndon Johnson administration, Vice President Hubert Humphrey was pictured in the maternal role. Henry Kissinger, the Nixon administration's one-man brain trust, naturally falls into the role of child/craftsman. And, last but certainly not least—every family must have one—Vice President Spiro T. Agnew played the part of child/clown—the hell raiser, *l'enfant terrible*, provocateur, always good for a laugh or a cry depending upon your particular persuasion.

A review of old newspapers and magazines reveals that every American president has been presented to the American public—together with his close associates—in an archetypal family role. The roles, of course, are quite likely to be fictional at the reality level. Any image must be fictional, as it is only a gross simplification of reality. The reality of any man, especially that of a successful American politician, is complex, inconsistent, and most unknowable. Images are al-

ways crystal clear, simple, consistent, open, believable, and *absolute nonsense*.

The Boston Bruins hockey team is another classic example of archetypal family planning. Over a hundred test subjects agreed, almost unanimously, on the familial roles of characters in the Bruin's cast of players. The father/politician was Phil Esposito; the mother/priestess, Don Awrey; the child/craftsman, Bobby Orr; the child/clown, Derek Sanderson.

Every well-publicized sports team in the nation has characters their fans can immediately place in the family role structure. These roles are probably created most often by the sportswriters who create the symbolic dimension of the rich and powerful sports-world industry in America.

Apply this family archetype to groups with whom you are familiar—in the neighborhood, at home, fraternally, at work, in sports, politics, even in religious groups. These family archetypes surround each of our lives almost everywhere we look. If they do not readily exist, we will create them. They are the stock-in-trade of the mass media. The danger, of course, is that people are not really like the family roles in which we place them and from which we assess their characters, abilities, moralities, etc. We select clues from dress, physique, background, and what we perceive as their image, and blend this into an already prepared mythological framework—a totally unconscious archetypal structure.

Myths, folklore, children's stories, as well as news, comics, dramas, and frequently musical lyrics are often inextricably involved with the family archetypes. When the mass media are viewed from the two principles that *conscious data are always superficial and illusionary and it is necessary to go beyond consciousness to gain a perspective into meaning*—it appears there is much more going on in newspapers than merely all the news that's fit to print.

#### *Media—A Member of the Family*

Consider first the complexities of the archetypal family structure which persists in all forms of media; now think of media itself—newspapers, magazines, and especially television—as actual participating members of North American families. Television is obvious in this respect. For a large proportion of the roughly 50 million U.S. families, televi-

sion—the one-eyed monster resident in every well-furnished living room—controls both *time* and *space*.

Television is a major consideration as to *when the family goes to bed* (after the 11:00 P.M. news), *when the family goes to the toilet or engages in conversation* (during commercials), *when the family eats meals or snacks*, *what family activities will be on weekends* (relative to games, program schedules, and sport seasons), *when parents do or do not have sex* (who wouldn't be tired after a night's hard work in front of the tube's window, pushing beer and potato chips down one's throat?).

Aside from the domination of time, perhaps the most devastating part of the TV legacy is the destruction of communication among family members. With everyone perceiving precisely the same image on a television screen, there are no unique perspectives for individuals. There is, therefore, really nothing to talk about. Try discussing a program you have seen on TV with someone who saw the same program. You can cover three hours of viewing in a handful of sentences.

The dilemma was illustrated in a recent *New Yorker* cartoon. It showed a street in a neighborhood full of apartment houses. In every window of every apartment a family could be seen watching a parade on their TV set. On the street below, the parade was passing with drum majorettes, bands playing, and flags waving. The sidewalks, however, were deserted. The caption read, "Will someone please close the window so we can hear the parade?"

Had these cartoon people seen the parade from the street, each would have had a slightly different perspective. A person on one side of the street would see, hear, smell, and feel something different from what a person would experience on the other side of the street. Even two people standing next to one another would each have a unique perceptual experience—each perceiving the sights, smells, temperature, noise, etc., in differing patterns and varying intensities.

The TV camera and sound equipment substitute for human eyes and ears, but of course cannot provide a *real* multisensory experience. Sight and sound are reproduced only in one perspective or dimension. Everyone who watches the screen experiences precisely the same event. The other thirty-five or so sensory inputs will not participate in the parade, but will be preoccupied with peripheral events within the living room. In short, when you see a parade, a war, a con-

cert, or whatever on television, you are not perceiving the event but a preprocessed and edited cameraman's, writer's, director's, sponsor's single-lensed version of the event communicated to viewers via only two sensory inputs—the eyes and ears.

Educational television experiments reveal that, indeed, many people can learn certain things perhaps better on TV than they could from a classroom with a real-life teacher. Distractions are minimized, attention is focused and concentrated, but this serves to communicate effectively only certain kinds of knowledge. Television is a superb training tool for information that is unitary, sequential, or standardized. As an educational tool, however, television is a disaster area. Education, as opposed and differentiated from training, requires subtle nuances of both teacher and audience reaction, human interpretations and discourse, multisensory experiences, unique individual responses and interpretations. Television is totally inadequate in any educational role other than that of a supplemental resource for a classroom instructor—irrespective of what people with vested interest in educational television have been telling us. In short, these experiments have established most emphatically that as a *training* device, or if you will, *brainwashing* or *conditioning* device, television has an enormous potential. Rudolph Arnheim, in his studies of art and human perception, concluded that rote mechanical learning is the very denial of meaningful experience.

Consider television, as a dominant family member throughout North America, in the role of subliminal educator over a period of, say, fifty years. Beginning almost at birth (children between the ages of two and six today perceive nearly thirty hours weekly of TV) and continuing until their mid-fifties, when over forty hours weekly is today perceived, television serves America as the greatest pacifier of them all—a total substitute for thumbsucking and toying with one's genitals. The TV machine regulates time, channelizes or unifies perceptual experience, and establishes (all subliminally) an entire range of desirable human expectations, value systems, identities, relationships, and perspectives toward the entire world. The tube has already become the primary source of information for a majority of the North American, if not the world's population. The prospects are Orwellian.

There exists no single or multiple mechanism available to

modern man which holds such a devastating potential for brainwashing, mass programming, and the destruction of individualism—with, of course, reinforcement from the other mass media. This threat is every bit as disastrous for the future of mankind and what we have come to call civilization as is pollution, overpopulation, or atomic and biological warfare.

### *Sensory Deprivation by Media*

Indeed, media-induced sensory deprivation among millions of media audiences may already have launched at least part of modern society on the road to neurosis and psychosis. We now have an entire generation whose sense of touch has been starved. A recent survey of university students asked them to detail the role played in their lives by TV. The responses were chilling. Many wrote about incredible loneliness, isolation, and eventual alienation from their families as they struggled emotionally to survive in TV-dominated homes where almost everything was subordinated to program schedules. "No one talked or touched, either symbolically or physically, except during commercials. Then it was, Hurry! Hurry! It's starting. . ." Communication of any sort had to be initiated and concluded within the 30- or 60-second commercial breaks.

Human relationships, the survey discovered, had not been left unscarred by television. Models for individual behavior, feelings, or actions are today found not in myths of gods and goddesses, not in the lives of our famous soldiers, scientists, artists, explorers, or intellectuals, not in the sacrifices of martyrs, saints, and heroes, but in the day-to-day stereotyped grist ground in the mills of TV production houses, much of which slips unnoticed into our unconscious and provides basic value orientations.

For over a decade the ideal two-parent family ruled the TV networks—"The Nelsons," "Father Knows Best," "I Love Lucy," and a plethora of both short- and long-lived idealized family units. More recently, the ideal family has turned out to be a one-parent family—"The Partridge Family," "My Three Sons," "Doris Day," "Nanny and the Professor," "The Courtship of Eddie's Father," and on and on. Producers believed that audience resistance had begun to develop against the program concept of two-parent utopias existing in suburbias throughout America. Actual records of

divorces, family upsets, and the other shattering emotional experiences which go on among suburban American families began to make the fictional, idealized two-parent TV family just *too perfect to be credible*.

No family in the history of the world was or ever will be like these fantasy idealizations dreamed up to merchandise detergents, analgesics and other psychosomatic medicines, and the other lavishly packaged displays of household and food products. Unfortunately, these fantasy families, superbly designed products of the merchandizing imagination, are not clearly recognized as fantasies. They are unconsciously accepted as the *real* thing or as models of what the real thing should look like. There is little doubt that television's so-called entertainment provides tens of millions of viewers with an education in human values and relationships, far more pervasive and significant than the socialization or educational processes communicated in public schools.

What growing child's father could stand up under a comparison with Fred MacMurray in "My Three Sons"? Or what mother is as constantly attractive, effervescent, loving, sympathetic, reasonable, emotionally balanced, and interesting as Doris Day or Shirley Jones in their respective TV families? After all, in spite of affluence, what parent could check with their writers, see their makeup artists, or talk it over with a director before blowing their top at one of their children or their spouse?

On television, parents, or symbolic parents, are always active, involved, interesting people. They must be, or at least appear to be, for their large audiences. They have the job of selling products—and it isn't easy considering the competition on opposing networks. The real-life parent, passively stretched out before the tube for a nightly sunbath in stereotyped imagery, must appear to any child as the opposite polarity of all that is good, worthwhile, and meaningful in the night's program schedule. Is it any wonder American parents have come to be viewed by their children as emasculated slobs?

As a dominant member of the family, television not only establishes models by which other (real-life) family members will assess each other, but establishes a basis for their individual self-images, the ways in which they perceive their own beings. Self-images are, of course, reinforced by all of the other media. As a merchandising technique, the sale of identity is every bit as profitable as the sale of cosmetics and

deodorants. Who are you? You can become anything or anyone you behold through the simple process of unconscious identification. Want to know how a hero behaves? Study Matt Dillon, Dr. Gannon, or McGarrett of "Hawaii Five-O." Want to be the life of the party? Take a course in Rowan and Martin or Carol Burnett. Want to be a charming, witty, and sought-after conversationalist and raconteur? Why not an advanced seminar in Merv Griffin, Dick Cavett, or Dinah Shore?

R. D. Laing, the British psychoanalyst, in his studies of schizophrenia among children, concluded that the best way to control and manipulate an individual is not to tell him what to do; that always generates resistance, hostility, and defiance. Instead, tell a person *who* and *what* they are. They will end up eating out of your hand or, in the case of the mass media, out of the sponsor's hand. Television is, of course, the most obvious director of human values and motivations among the media, but newspapers and magazines, radio, billboards, and the rest are also mutually reinforcing resources in the American struggle for identity. By the time an identity has been sorted out from the media morass, however, it has become outdated and inadequate, replaced by a new ideal identity pattern which must be discovered, pursued, and adapted, which in turn produces another....

Unquestionably, this situation offers a solid foundation for any mass merchandiser, as media-advertised products are the basic ingredient of the American identity. And, the poetic irony is that the mechanism operates at a subsensory level. You can't see it, hear it, or feel it. No one even knows consciously that anything is happening.

### *Identity Searching Among Media Images*

One brief example of the media-imposed identity delusion where media is a member of the family far more dominant and far more masculine or feminine than real-life fathers or mothers, is the phenomenon of adolescent omniscience. As a primary marketing target with billions of discretionary dollars available (unearned for the most part, but given as a media-induced tranquilizer for parental guilt over their failure as parents), young people have been repeatedly and patronizingly told they are God's own children—smarter, wiser, more sensitive, more educated, more idealistic, braver, more individualistic than all young people who have gone

before them during the long history of mankind. In order to create a youth market, merchandisers first had to clearly differentiate unique qualities in the consumer's self-perception which make him different from other mere mortals.

Young people have been told *ad nauseum*—sometimes directly but usually through models and by implication—of their great unprecedented and even awesome capabilities. Usually, their omniscience is shown to be a direct product of media and the high level of saturation in media they have experienced since childhood. Media has taught them more than any other generation has known, given them greater insights into truth, qualified them to correct, discipline, and criticize their elders—who are pathetic failures, throwbacks to a stagnant, dead, and meaningless world of obsolete values.

It is even more incredible that one often hears full-grown adults talk in awe of the wisdom and omniscience of their half-grown, half-educated, half-mature children. Where—especially after what the world has endured during the past half century—would anyone come up with such unadulterated absurdity? You guessed it—media, in all its glory. Many adults, if they stopped to think about it, might still remember the wisdom of youth as it was manipulated in the Nazi, Fascist, and Communist youth movements.

Perhaps, however, in one respect these young people have been exposed to more information than any generation before them. But take a careful look at the quality of that information. They have seen war and death and violence on television and in the other media. But actually what they have seen is a carefully edited and censored version, far removed from the *real* multisensory experience of perceiving the *real* thing.

The war news on NBC has been shot by a skilled newsman, carefully trying to capture what he believes his editors, the network, and the sponsors want him to capture. If he fails to meet their expectations, he will simply be replaced. The news he writes and photographs is processed through many hands who edit, delete, and combine before the final broadcast version is prepared. A one-minute film on Vietnam appearing on the NBC News could easily have been edited out of 60 to 90 minutes of film shot and processed that day. What finally appears is a highly modified or cleaned-up version of war, reduced for perception at only the visual and auditory levels. Whatever comes through in this illusion

labeled "News of the Vietnam War" has only the remotest relationship with what is really going on in Vietnam.

A similar parallel can be drawn on space flights, riots, strikes, tragedies, and disasters which are regularly featured as devices to sell media and advertising. They simply are not even remotely the real thing, but they have been passed off as such, especially among young people naturally eager for exposure to life, action, and significant events. A young man at the time of Socrates would have far greater contact with the realities of life and death than would any of the TV wet-nursed generation. War, death, famine, sickness, indeed all of life's experiences, would have been very close to his perception every time he stepped out of the front door; life at its best and worst awaited him in the streets—real life, not ersatz illusions of real life misrepresented, in the words of Coca-Cola's latest banality, as "The Real Thing!"

## 4. The Media Immersion—Baptism by Words and Pictures

Both conscious and unconscious motives lie behind every human communication situation. Motives are implied in every message—from a simple greeting, to a journalist's report of a news event, to an intense dramatic presentation through television or film. No form of human communication can be understood or reasonably evaluated without some consideration of both conscious and unconscious motives of the communicator.

Involvement in the transmission and reception of messages implies that each party (sender and receiver) tacitly assumes they have something to gain from the message. The message, for maximum effectiveness, must relate to motives or goal-seeking behavior at both ends of the communication. Remember, however, that motives can easily exist in a repressed state within the brain's unconscious mechanism. Many theorists maintain that most of an individual's "real" motives operate at this unconscious level. Conscious or stated motives are usually evasions, camouflage, or frequently mere rationalization serving superficial ego needs.

Motives, generally defined, involve *reasons for action or attention, goals to be pursued, or purposes to be served*. Since the conscious motive is often merely a screen for the "real" or unconscious motive, the entire subject of human motive is difficult to deal with in behavioral studies. The moment a motive is questioned, the ego becomes threatened and rises in outraged defense. This may hide the basic motive even deeper.

Any successful salesman will confirm that a basic customer strategy is to determine which purchasing motives, especially those which the prospect himself is consciously unaware of, are most important. These unconscious but omnipresent motives rarely involve simply the quality or price of a product. They more often relate to the prospect's ego needs,

such as status, dominance, security, or recognition. If a salesman can relate his product to a prospect's unconscious needs, he stands an excellent chance to make a sale.

The game is played in all forms of interpersonal communication. Hidden agendas, goals, objectives, purposes, desires, are implied, though rarely announced openly, in every human situation. Most unconscious motives apparently involve how an individual sees other people seeing him. In short, the most utilitarian motives in communication relate to man's inexhaustible need to support and reinforce his ego. The resultant strategies for manipulation are virtually infinite in number.

### *Disguised Profit Motives*

The motives implied in all forms of mass communication are quite similar to those involved in interpersonal relationships, though perhaps in some respects they are relatively simpler. As the mass media of communication in North America serve primarily as a platform for advertisers, the personal motives of communicators and their mass media are invariably subordinated to economic motives. The name of the game is *sell* or *communicate* (these verbs are used synonymously in media jargon) and derive a profit. All media are corporate enterprises in the United States. Corporate enterprises exist primarily as economic profit-making entities. Profit is what media is all about.

This is not necessarily a questionable motive, even though anyone who professes a profit motive too openly is likely to find himself distrusted. Corporations function primarily in a profit-and-loss ethic, yet in our society this ethic is carefully camouflaged for the general public.

The media of mass communication go to great extremes, in their public relations strategies, to disguise their primary profit motive. The credibility of a communication source becomes highly suspect once the profit motive is emphasized. But, profit is always there—the year-end stockholders' report which defines success or failure in terms of earnings.

Mass media must therefore appear to operate primarily in the "public interest," publicly relegating the profit motive to an obscure position on the hierarchy of motive if they are to sustain effective communication with their audiences. The illusion of public interest is reinforced by governmental, political, social, and educational institutions throughout the so-

ciety. The mass media do, indeed, often serve the public interest with distinction. There is one major catch, however: the public interest must never conflict with the long-term interest of corporate profit.

This analysis is not intended to denounce profit, corporate enterprise, or the ethics of capitalism. The benefits, as well as the disasters, these entities have bestowed upon the world are obvious. The media of mass communication will, furthermore, be controlled in every society by that society's institutions. The profit-dominated mass communication media system of Western society may, in truth, be vastly superior to the political-dominated system of communist societies—both in terms of social benefits derived and the varied perspectives presented. The point is that mass communication media must serve the motives—both apparent and hidden—of the controlling power structure within any society.

American mass media exist in a perpetual selling posture. They must sell their audiences, sell the societal institutions, and sell their advertisers. Media advertising rates are predicated upon the size and quality of respective audiences. Media cannot survive as an economic entity without maintaining the audience that will attract advertisers. Media content—writing styles, photographs, art, typography, etc.—are the devices that control audience composition in both quality and size.

Audience size is important. *Time* magazine sells 5.6 million copies per week, providing its advertisers with over 24 million readers weekly. The "Bob Hope Chrysler Specials" on television reached audiences in excess of 70 million viewers. "Bonanza," one of the longest tenured of video families, was estimated to have a weekly international audience of 400 million viewers; it was a top-rated show in Argentina, Peru, Japan, Spain, France, and even the Soviet Union. Even newspapers, with smaller, localized audiences, fight tenaciously against competitive media to maintain reader saturation or audience dominance in their communities.

Audience quality is now as important as size, if not more so. Advertising rates in the national media are predicated upon the cost per thousand readers who are likely to purchase specific product categories.

For example, according to U.S. government statistics only 29.2 percent of all U.S. households boast annual incomes of \$10,000 or more. This 29.2 percent accounts for 54 percent of the total annual personal income in the U.S. The male

head of these households is the primary audience target for such magazines as *Esquire*, *Life*, *Look*, *Newsweek*, *New Yorker*, *Playboy*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report*.

### *Heavy Users: The Prime Target*

An advertiser who is looking for prospective consumers of men's slacks however, could not care less how large a portion of an audience consumes cigarettes. Each advertiser will buy the medium which provides him with the largest percentage of people who purchase his product. Furthermore, advertisers do not focus their expensive sales appeals upon casual or infrequent purchasers—they shoot hard for the *heavy consumer*. Of course, media must aim at very large-sized audiences to provide the advertiser with a meaningful number of heavy consumers in each product category.

For example, heavy users of most standard alcoholic beverages are considered those who drink fifteen or more drinks a week. If the advertisement can sell one of these heavy consumers, this could be comparable to selling five light users who consume five or fewer drinks per week. In addition, heavy users tend to provide leadership within their personal relationships for the products they use heavily. As interpersonal communication from a leader within a group is the most effective form of sales communication, ads designed for these heavy users can serve as a catalyst for further sales.

Recall the fabled pecking order among chickens, which also curiously takes place among humans. In every group of two or more people, there is a leader operating. Delineation of leadership characteristics is often difficult because leaders tend to vary in appearance and personality characteristics by product or subject category. A man who is accepted as a leader in beer brand preferences may well be distinctively different—both demographically and in terms of the emotional needs he fulfills among his followers—than a person who is accepted by the same peer group as a leader in, say, political candidate preferences.

In one recent study a dozen men's bars were equipped with hidden cameras. Groups of men were filmed at tables where beer was being drunk. Once the leader was determined, the brand of beer he drank was noted. An average of nearly seven out of ten men in each group were drinking the beer brand preferred by the leader. This was remarkable

particularly because none of the men in these groups, including the leaders, were consciously aware of the pecking order phenomenon.

A composite portrait was synthesized of the beer leaders filmed. In a large beer advertising campaign it was used as a primary identification figure. Strangely, the leader in beer brand preference turned out to be an individual who was not particularly liked or respected by the men he led. This composite was a man few of his peers would invite into their homes. But for many reasons relative to the apparent sexual dominance of this character, he appeared to play a consciously unrecognized, though significant, role in guiding beer preference among his followers. The composite of the beer leader became a primary character in a multimillion dollar series of animated television advertisements.

Leaders generally appear to be just like their followers in respect to the product, only more so. Leadership studies in product selection suggest that the granting of leadership prerogatives by a group—at the unconscious, not the conscious level—is based upon the unconscious goals or motives each consumer hopes a particular brand selection will serve.

### *Cost per Thousand Users*

Now to return to the basic media advertising strategy. Advertising rates are predicated upon the cost per thousand readers who are heavy product users in various product categories.

Only 6.2 percent of all adult men consume more than fifteen drinks a week. These heavy users account for 43 percent of all male alcoholic beverage consumption. Of the male readers in the *New Yorker*, 15.3 percent are heavy drinkers and they can be reached, with a black and white full-page advertisement, at a cost per thousand of \$16.29. (Brand Rating Index Data).

Only 8.9 percent of *Look* readers, on the other hand, were heavy drinkers and they were reached at a cost per thousand of \$25.39. *Look* had a much larger circulation than did the *New Yorker*, but on the basis of cost per thousand for heavy users, the *New Yorker* was a better buy for the general alcoholic beverage advertisers. The cost per thousand for drinkers varies, however, when the total heavy alcoholic beverage consumers are subcategorized into heavy

drinkers of Scotch, bourbon, Canadian, blended, gin, vodka, rum, wine, brandy and cognac, cordials or liqueurs, beer, and ale.

In men's suits, for example, only 17.4 percent of all adult men in the United States purchase two or more suits a year. These heavy users account for 66.9 percent of all suit purchases by men. Thirty-three percent of the readers of *U.S. News* are heavy suit purchasers who can be reached through the magazine at the cost of \$6.77 per thousand in a full-page black and white advertisement. Only 22.6 percent of *Life* readers, on the other hand, were heavy suit purchasers and the cost per thousand to reach them was \$10.63.

Newspapers, television, magazines, direct mail advertising, and even the motion picture industry use a bewildering variety of consumer and audience research as a basis for their content design. Media survival depends entirely upon an audience's propensity to purchase the merchandise advertised.

To briefly illustrate the economic involvement of media, consider that a full-page, four-color ad in *Playboy* sells for \$35,780; *Time*, \$46,000; a one-minute commercial on the *Bob Hope* television show, \$140,000; even a full-page ad in *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, \$7,520.

Advertising in North America is now a \$20 billion annual industry (\$1 billion in Canada), and is unquestionably responsible—through the movement of products and services in our economy—for a heavy portion of North American affluence.

Advertising expenditures correlate with the rate of increase in the U.S. gross national product. Should advertising be stopped suddenly, American economic affluence would almost immediately disappear, unemployment would increase, the stock market would enter into convulsions, and the country would certainly plunge into a period of economic chaos and depression. This is neither an exaggeration nor an attempt to overstate the present critical role of advertising to our way of life. Some Americans often complain bitterly about the annoyance of advertising, but in the management of markets—indispensable to their so-called way of life—media are today the basic instruments in the control and security of economic growth and affluence.

The average U.S. adult is estimated to spend thirty-two minutes per day reading a newspaper—an average of nine to ten thousand words. From sources such as magazines, books,

signs, billboard, recipes, instructions, pamphlets, and so on, Americans perceive another twenty to thirty thousand words per day out of the seventy to eighty thousand to which they are exposed.

An average American adult reads eighteen to twenty thousand words per hour, so these general reading sources add roughly another hour or two of reading time.

He also spends an hour and a quarter per day listening to radio—more if he enjoys FM—and hears several thousand more professionally structured words in addition to music and lyrics.

Television is viewed by adults in the United States an average of 6.5 hours per day—throw in another seventy to eighty thousand words. The time and words involved in motion picture viewing contribute to an even heavier audiovisual load.

In the mass media, time and space are merchandised—every split second of time and every square centimeter of space. The basic reason for the existence of media is *sell*—content sells the publication or program to desirable strata of audience, providing a platform for advertising which sells products and supports the media. Time and space must be used purposively to communicate and accelerate maximum imagery levels consistent with the basic motive of media institutions—*sell and make money or perish*.

### *The Huckster Mythology*

North Americans have constructed an enormous mythology about the role of advertising in media, helped of course by the media themselves. Few are willing to concede the relevance or importance in their lives of advertising. Most people simply say they make up their own minds—a very necessary illusion media must perpetuate in order to succeed in making up their minds for them. And most people sincerely do believe they are unaffected. They rarely read ads, or so they say. They claim to turn off their minds when commercials appear on television. Most have been thoroughly sold on the notion that advertising is irrelevant, completely separate from news or programs; that advertising people are rather flamboyant, foolish, and generally ineffectual; and that advertising is probably a waste of money for most clients, who merely get an ego trip out of seeing their product's name appear in print.

One executive in the office of Consumer Affairs in Washington said defensively, after reviewing some of the material presented in this book, that he "had never known an advertising man smart enough to do what they have apparently done with subliminal advertising." This rationalization is wishful thinking—\$21 billion a year worth of wishful thinking.

Amazingly, Americans have elaborately hidden from themselves the embarrassing realities of an enormous industry which subtly educates them on *whose* purchases can be compared with their own, *what* is available to purchase, *why* they should replace old purchases with new, *where* they can make their next purchase most economically, *when* are the best times to purchase the incredible array of merchandise that forms the backbone of the so-called American way of life, and *how* to plan for new, more elaborate, and more expensive purchases.

A wide range of marketing studies have even revealed an inheritance characteristic in brand preferences. If a mother used a certain brand of canned milk, soap pads, detergent, sanitary napkin, and so on, the probability her daughter would continue her brand preferences (at least through part of her adult life) ranged from 40 to 80 percent on various products. Men will often continue their fathers' brand preferences for gasoline, automobiles, clothing, shoes, even wives.

In spite of advertising's mythological uselessness, retail audits and various other forms of consumer research continue to indicate unquestionable correlations between advertising appropriations, media utilization, and product sales. Like it or not, each one of us is continuously and strongly affected by advertising and the media it supports. There is literally no escape. If there is a significant difference between North Americans' response to media, it is a problem of how much they respond, not of whether or not they do.

The most carefully prepared portion of media content is advertising. The average U.S. adult is exposed to over 500 advertising messages daily, of which he consciously perceives only around 75, and may act upon perhaps a dozen or less. He blocks out from consciousness at least 85 percent of the ad messages and acts daily upon an average of 2.5 percent. The frantic competition for audiences' attention and favor is unbelievably intense and intensifying rapidly.

During the roughly *nine hours* per day of immersion in some form of commercially motivated mass communication

media, the average U.S. adult consumes over 100,000 carefully edited, slanted, and skillfully composed words—words which sell, propose, and plead for his attention, his sympathy, his loyalty, and most of all—his money. This does not include stimuli that may be involved with his means of subsistence and which he must perceive and respond to during his working hours.

Visual or pictorial stimuli are even more intense than words. Through illustrations, photographs, television, and motion picture images, the visual pressure in modern society has increased at a prodigious rate during the past decade.

Media content—the articles and fiction of magazines, the news and features in newspapers, the news, dramatic, and variety programs of television—are the means by which specified types of audiences are made available to advertisers. It is virtually impossible for media to economically survive anymore by private sponsorship or by circulation income. The general audience media are vanishing—*Colliers*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Look*, *Life*. Building circulation, considering the types of circulation required by advertisers, is an expensive business. Circulation income is fortunate to break even. Usually publications lose money on their wholesale cost per issue. Long ago media became subservient, both overtly and covertly, to the economics of marketing and salesmanship.

This is not intended as a casual indictment of media serving the gods of high finance, industry, commerce, or government. Indeed, media have frequently served constructive purposes within North American society. The U.S. population has materially benefited to an unbelievable degree from the effects of media. But the monster created to serve the objectives of material economic gain could ultimately turn out to have two heads—one of which may ultimately devour everyone. North American society and its life-style have evolved a tremendous dependence upon the ethics of *sell*—a dependence upon skillfully manufactured illusions and fantasies about ourselves and the world in which we live.

#### *The Tulip Garden of Brand Differences*

For centuries throughout most of Western civilization, the general criterion or definition of sanity has been *an individual's ability to discriminate between reality and illusion*. North American society appears to be moving farther and farther

away from the recognition of reality. Illusions are now generated from illusions which were generated from illusions, which were....

Tiptoeing through the tulip garden of commercially motivated illusion, variety and differences and entire value systems have been manufactured for us by experiential industries who relentlessly pursue our discretionary incomes. For example, there has never been any real difference among gasoline brands in the United States. Each is manufactured to strict U.S. Bureau of Standards specifications. Yet, most of us tend to seriously believe that one brand makes our car run better than another. By itself, these nonexistent differences in gasoline are probably harmless. They have actually produced an extremely effective marketing and distribution system for gasoline.

Consider also that thousands of beer drinkers, some with near religious fanaticism, believe they can clearly distinguish among major beer brands. They cannot—a fact that has been clearly proven by hundreds of national flavor tests for years. Beer manufacturers have spent a fortune in quality and flavor controls to make certain their product tastes exactly like all other dominant beers in the marketplace. Any slight flavor deviation would doom a brand to a minority market. Differences in major beer brand flavors are created by the shape and color of bottles, labels, and the proliferation of image advertising.

In a recent national study of three major U.S. cigarette brands, trying to evaluate flavor variations in brand perception, only 1.33 percent of smokers could distinguish among the three major brands' taste—not a statistically significant number of smokers. Yet "taste" would appear to be the basic selling point for every major cigarette brand in the world.

It has been decades since any significant technical difference was designed into U.S. automobiles. They are, in fact, all the same in terms of their mechanical function at comparative price ranges. The only reason parts do not interchange is because that would destroy the exclusive replacement market created by each car sale. Once a new car is sold, the companies can anticipate selling the car again, through planned obsolescence—perhaps even twice in terms of profit derived—during the car's roughly five years of more or less dependable life.

Indeed, a Ford marketing executive in Dearborn recently

said, almost arrogantly, that automobiles have not been marketed as a means of transportation in America for a quarter century. Vehicles, he explained, are sold for their image or symbolic values—female surrogates, status reinforcements, virility expressions, or support for a buyer's illusions of freedom and individuality. The largest and most powerful industry in America depends for survival upon ego images or fantasies rather than transportation realities.

Synthetic orange juice, for another example, is merchandised presently through ads which imply it is "better than its imitators." As the TV announcer discusses the competitive imitators, real oranges are shown visually; viewers will perceive the subliminal message that real orange juice is only an imitation of the synthetic. Ridiculous? You can only wish it was absurd. The TV commercials for synthetic juice are pushing millions of dollars worth of the product into the market monthly. Someone even managed to slip the stuff on the last few space flights to the moon. And you, the American consumer, continue to buy and buy and buy in response to these illusions.

The "crotch" magazines—*Playboy* and its competitors—present masterful illusions of women who are consummate products of skilled photo technology, lighting, and cosmetics. There has never been, nor will there ever be, a real woman like the centerfold picture in *Playboy*. She exists only in the frustration-laden sexual fantasies of the immature reader. Yet, a young man weaned upon such idealized masturbatory fantasies may well spend his life trying to obtain a real woman who can match the Playmate fantasy of idealized perfection. Our *Playboy* is doomed to a lifetime of playing with himself as he contemplates goddess-like centerfold illusions. According to Freud, blindness is symbolic of castration. The sightless Oedipus was compelled to lean on a staff for support. The staff, of course, is a phallic symbol, as is *Playboy*. Imagine the pathetic plight of a real woman becoming maritally committed to a *Playboy* whose immaturity and blindness to reality must be constantly nourished by fantasy and illusion.

The media proliferation has made it almost impossible to see what is really going on. Pressured from all sides by competitive media screaming for attention, the average citizen blindly stumbles along, placing his trust and confidence in his leaders somehow doing the right thing. Our modern, "educated" citizens' support for mythology, magic, and su-

perstition—initiated and supported by media—is every bit as pervasive today as was true in the so-called primitive societies. The difference, however, is that few of us would admit that our myths are anything but reasonable, logical, scientifically proven facts of life. We study primitive religions and feel superior, medieval superstitions and feel liberated, ancient symbols of love and death and feel scientifically advanced. If modern man had the wisdom and insight to perceive himself, his institutions, and his life-styles as would an anthropologist in, say, the twenty-fifth century, he might well appear as scientifically and philosophically pathetic and superstition-ridden as the stone-age cultures now appear.

Detachment and perspective are absolutely essential for pattern recognition. The media perform a superb job of hammering relentlessly at our psyches, increasing tension to and beyond the breaking point, forcing reality into deeper and deeper depths of repression. Anthropologist Edmund Carpenter put the dilemma well: "Most journals, newspapers, TV shows, etc., merely repeat clichés, and the real clichés they repeat are their own formats. As clichés, they become environmental and hence unseen."

### *Biggest Bang for the Buck*

The advertising industry is one of the most tight-fisted businesses in the world. Each dollar of a client's account spent must return to the client both sales and profits. If an advertiser spends 5 percent of his gross sales income on advertising, in order to break even he must realize twenty times that amount in sales from each advertisement. No one in business simply breaks even—not for long anyway.

A \$35,780 full-page four-color ad in *Playboy*, to which has been added anywhere from \$5,000 to \$15,000 in artwork and copy, represents in round figures a \$50,000 investment to an advertiser. Multiply this by 20, if his advertising budget is 5 percent of gross sales, and you have the break-even point in sales for a single *Playboy* ad—a minimal transactional value of \$1 million. And, remember, this is only the break-even point; an effective advertisement might sell two or three times this break-even point.

Advertising effectiveness is exhaustively evaluated through pretesting the ad, by dozens of different market research techniques, and through retail sales audits. Direct cause-and-effect relationships between specific ads are admittedly dif-

ficult to achieve. But over a period of time, advertisers, their agencies, and the media can obtain highly accurate insights into whether the products are, so to speak, making out. Research, supporting the whole function of media in American society, is nearly a billion dollar industry in itself. Virtually every aspect of the American public's product and brand preferences, product utilization, conscious and unconscious goals or motivations underlying product selection, and response to advertising and media content are available through audience and consumer research organizations to any medium or its advertisers.

Virtually the same sales techniques are available to the producers of media content as are available to advertisers. Unless the television show, magazine, or newspaper achieves the "right" kind of audience profile, no advertiser will consider it a worthwhile investment. Media content must supply advertisers with a predictably sized audience with specific demographic as well as emotional-need characteristics. Communication success, or profit, demands every strategy conceivable in the care and feeding of audiences.

In the strenuous competition by media to have specific types of bodies included within their audience structures, anything is fair. The game is to participate as generously as possible in the roughly \$20 billion advertisers' annual investment.

To assume that any medium, especially the competitively hard-pressed newspaper, is exempt from the competitive need to survive economically in this struggle for the consumer's attention is wishful thinking. Newspapers are presently at the greatest disadvantage of all media in their competition for advertising due to high production costs, limited metropolitan circulations, and high costs per thousand readers in crucial product categories. The past fifteen-year history of proxy battles, bankruptcies, mergers, and constant staff reorganizations in the newspaper field attests to the increased commercial pressures from television and other media. Therefore news and other peripheral information are, in effect, merchandised in the same behavioral sense as are underarm deodorants, cigarettes, and soft drinks.

All of the mass media are faced with the same dilemma. In competing for desirable audiences for advertisers, the editors, writers, directors, photographers, cameramen, artists, and the rest of the highly skilled media technicians continu-

ously exhaust their creativity in the development of content material audiences will find interesting.

### *Our Idealized World View—of Ourselves*

Perhaps the most effective general technique in the care and feeding of media audiences is simply to tell them what they want to hear or what they need to hear, at both the conscious and unconscious levels. Audiences' idealized views of both themselves and what they wish the world were like are projected through the mirror of media. The reflections absorbed by the reader projects back to him his own idealized self-image.

This technique of self-flattery is illustrated by Marshall McLuhan's precept—*Narcissus Narcosis*—taken from the Greek myth of Narcissus who, on seeing his reflection in a pool of water, was hypnotized by this vision of beauty, nobility, wisdom, and perfection, and fell in love with his own image.

This is, perhaps, not an unusual aspect of human behavior. There may be quite a little conscious Narcissus in all of us as we preen ourselves in front of a mirror, trying to imagine what we look like to others. Narcissus' problem, however, was that he never found out the image he loved so passionately was his own. This major error in perception eventually killed him. Perhaps like Narcissus, few of us see the mass communication media as a mirror for our idealized pretensions.

How many readers saw the daily news from Vietnam, for example, as a carefully processed and edited version of reality designed to reinforce our predispositions toward the war and our own self-images? If you favored the war, there was news to flatter you for your wisdom. If you opposed the war, you were likewise accommodated. Often both sides can find comfort in the same news story if the writer has been clever enough. The Vietnam war news was reported to Americans by Americans, and to other countries by their own nationals, in ways which reflected each nation's prevailing attitude and beliefs toward the war in terms of various national self-interests. It was a curious experience to have read the same war story as reported in a French, British, Soviet, Mexican, and U.S. newspaper. Even the so-called facts were often different. The impression immediately came through that somebody

must be lying if the assumption is made that there is such a thing as objective "truth."

Lying is not necessarily the case. The media of each respective country is merely reporting an event consistent with the predispositions of the audience within that country. Of course, the views of each government and what it wants its citizens to feel about a war are also often a factor. The estimated \$190 million spent annually by the Pentagon on public relations has as much to do with the structuring of war information for the American public as the Communist Party's Central Committee might have over *Izvestia* for the Soviet public—though, of course, the Pentagon's job is more difficult due to the lack of a monopoly on the media. In another example, the publication in 1972 of secret government reports increased *The New York Times'* daily circulation by 60,000 copies. The reports, of course, were valuable information to the U.S. public, but their publication also served an economic motive. It might be interesting to consider the editor's reaction to a news story which might result in a 60,000-copy decrease in circulation.

To summarize this chapter, in terms of a primary motive for the American media, the control and maintenance of an audience in behalf of the advertisers is a fundamental *raison d'être*. To accomplish this, media must reinforce existing attitudes and perspectives. Media rarely, except on a long-term basis which is highly unpredictable, brings about attitudinal change in the reader's view of himself and the world which surrounds him.

In America, media representing a multitude of views, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions are readily available. Any reader so inclined could avail himself of this rich variety of perspectives—from *The Wall Street Journal* to *Evergreen Review*, from "Bonanza" to "Sesame Street," from *The Christian Science Monitor* to the *Berkeley Barb*. The fact is, however, that virtually no one reads or selects from this rich abundance. Readers consistently seek out that medium which essentially tells them what they want to hear.

The Narcissus Narcosis phenomenon occurs on the unconscious level and includes a hypnotic effect. Audiences, like Narcissus, are unaware of what is really going on in their minds. In order for media to succeed in the care and feeding of desirable audiences, the audience is never permitted backstage. The entire field of mass communication is veiled by a self-flattering mystique. The veil is so heavy and

so exquisitely decorated that even if the audience could see through it firsthand, most would probably discredit their perceptions.

Reinforced by institutionalized public relations programs, historical traditions constantly reinterpreted and updated to serve the needs of the present, and the endless catering to the audience's idealized view of itself—all of this either ignored or unconscious to the audience—constitute a basic mechanism in the subliminal utilization of the audience psyches.

## 5. It's What You Don't See That Sells You

The use of subliminal stimuli as a device for motivating audiences in the various media has reached a high level of technical proficiency. It is indeed remarkable that these techniques could have developed over the past decade without anyone's finding out what was going on.

The motive behind advertising is pure and singular: *sell* and *sell* and *sell*. The communicators' techniques of achieving this motive, however, are well hidden. Symbol identification and repression mechanisms, in the unconscious of the multimillion audiences, are used extensively. The possible variations appear infinite.

One ad for Bacardi rum was run in *Playboy*, *Time*, and *Esquire* magazines (see Figure 8). To solidly establish motive, consider what the Bacardi Corporation invested in this ad with only these three publications.

A full-page, four-color ad in *Playboy* at the time sold for \$35,780; in *Time*, \$55,175; and in *Esquire*, \$14,300. Art and copy for a full-page national ad probably cost in the neighborhood of \$10,000. This may appear like an expensive photograph but, considering the selling job demanded, it is probably cheap. It adds to a total investment by Bacardi in only the above three publications of \$115,255. Estimating Bacardi advertising at 5 percent of gross sales, the ad's break-even point would be 20 times \$115,225, or roughly \$2,305,000 in rum sales just on the one-time insertion with these three publications.

Not every reader of these magazine drinks rum, so the ad was aimed at a small portion of the total readership. In the United States, *Playboy* sold 4.1 million copies, with 3.35 readers per copy, or 13.7 million total readers. *Time* sold 3.9 million copies, with 4.4 readers per copy, or 17.2 million readers. *Esquire* sold 1.1 million copies, with 6.18 readers per copy, or 6.7 million total readers. The three magazines, con-

sidering only their U.S. circulations, were read monthly by 37.6 million readers. This equals the combined total populations of New York State, California, and Massachusetts.

A very large number of total readers are necessary for Bacardi to obtain a substantial, and manipulatable, proportion of the 3.4 percent of adult U.S. males who consume 82.2 percent of all rum consumed by men. Reduced to only heavy rum drinkers, defined as those drinking one or more rum drinks per week, 2.7 percent of the total U.S. male population account for 80 percent of total rum consumption.

Presumably these heavy rum drinkers, if they can be reached, will serve leadership roles at the interpersonal communication level in communicating brand preferences among the .7 percent of U.S. rum-drinking male adults who are light drinkers—those consuming less than one drink per week.

Via the three publications—*Playboy*, *Time* and *Esquire*—this small proportion of U.S. male adults is reached at a specific cost per thousand readers. As stated earlier, the cost per thousand (CPM) figure is the basic economic justification for all media advertising—and, therefore, content in magazines, newspapers, television, radio, billboards, and so on.

To publish a full-page black and white advertisement in *Playboy*, the cost per thousand for rum drinkers, who are 28.2 percent of their male readers, is \$8.73. The CPM to reach *Playboy* heavy rum drinkers, 6.5 percent of the male readership, is \$38.14.

In *Time* the cost per thousand for rum drinkers, 25.2 percent of their male readers, is \$8.47. To reach heavy rum drinkers through *Time*, 5.1 percent of their male readers, costs \$41.64 per thousand.

The *Esquire* CPM for male rum drinkers, 26.9 percent of their readership, is \$7.80. *Esquire's* heavy male rum drinkers are reached at \$34.47 per thousand and are 6.1 percent of the magazine's readers.

The above figures are for black and white advertisements. The Bacardi ad would be more expensive as it uses a full four-color reproduction.

Now, with at least some concept of the economics involved with the Bacardi ad, the display must minimally sell \$2.5 million in Bacardi rum through the three publications to break even. Examine the Bacardi ad carefully to see how this multimillion dollar transaction works.

The ad was tested with several hundred university students

who were asked which of the four rums they would prefer to buy. Over 80 percent chose number four. When asked if they understood what *ron añejo* meant, none knew the meaning or, for that matter, had ever heard the words before. No one had ever drunk *ron añejo*.

A slight preference appeared among female test subjects for the second bottle—Dark-Dry Rum. The chains around the glass curiously appeared to attract a significant number of women. But still, the overwhelming preference of the students was for *ron añejo*.

This appeared strange. The test subjects overwhelmingly preferred to buy a rum which none had ever experienced. Only about 20 percent of the subjects had ever drunk any kind of rum. There appeared no difference in the strong preference to buy *ron añejo* between those who had drunk rum and those who had not. Yet over 80 percent insisted they would prefer to buy *ron añejo*, which means simply in Spanish—aged rum.

There could be several explanations for this preference. The *añejo* bottle is slightly taller than the other three. The words "Extra Special" might establish a preference as the higher status or more expensive rum pictured. The wine-red color also might emphasize this rum over the other colors. And, the brandy glass may appear to have a higher status image than the other glasses shown.

But the name of the game is not only to establish a preference for a particular brand, but to persuade readers to buy the products. This ad is successful only if it plants a specific brand preference in a drinker's mind the next time a purchasing decision is required, which could be literally weeks after the consumer has perceived the ad and while he is consciously unaware of even having seen the ad.

So how is all this accomplished? Especially considering that even minutes after these millions of readers have momentarily viewed the Bacardi ad, very few of them could consciously recall either the ad or its content? How then could this advertisement be expected to influence a purchasing decision weeks, perhaps months, after it has been seen and consciously forgotten?

A careful investigation of the shadows in the bottom of the brandy glass tells the story. The shadows, of course, were painted in by a retouch artist. If a mirror is held above the shadows, the mirror image will read: U BUY. The unconscious mind, it has been well-established by research, is capa-

ble of reading mirror images, even upside-down mirror images.

The U BUY message is, in effect, planting what could be compared with a posthypnotic suggestion in the prospective consumer's unconscious.

True, this posthypnotic suggestion will not work on everyone—no more than would the tachistoscope or light threshold mechanical devices used to induce subliminal stimuli discussed earlier. But, there is no question that subliminal techniques of this sort will affect a statistically significant number of individuals in any large group. The 37.6 million readers who were likely, at least momentarily, to perceive the Bacardi advertisement in only these three publications, is certainly a very large group.

It is difficult to ignore the question as to how many individuals who have never before drunk alcohol will be affected by subliminal stimuli such as that in the Bacardi ad.

### *The Happy American Family*

One of the happy families which live in various Seagram's advertisements presents another type of subliminal manipulation (see Figure 9). The cocktail party hostess ad appeared on the back cover of *Time*. This back cover, in the world edition, which sells 5.5 million copies and is read by 24.2 million people, cost \$68,450. Though this layout was used in several publications, the break-even sales level for the *Time* cover alone would be around \$1.5 million worth of Seagram's products sold.

Slightly over half (56.1 percent) of total *Time* readers are men—13.6 million male adults. Though the hostess ad is primarily directed at men, it also carries some interesting subliminal ideas for women.

The average age of the *Time* reader is 38 years. The average individual income is \$6,501, the household income \$11,071. This suggests working and somewhat independent, older, well-educated wives dominate the households of a majority of *Time* reader families.

Now, what is going on at the cocktail party and what does it mean, in terms likely to stimulate purchase preferences for Seagram's products?

Remember, advertisements are not designed to be carefully studied and analyzed. They are meant to be read—at both the conscious and unconscious levels—almost instantaneous-

ly. Designs are worked out in relation to an exposure time, for the average reader, measured in seconds. Either the ad does its job during this quick, very brief exposure, or it is a waste of time, effort, and money. Only the unconscious mind, which does not discriminate, evaluate, and make value judgments, can operate at this speed. The conscious mind, if the ad were to rely upon a cognitive thought process, would take far too long to assimilate the information and proposal. And many readers would find the conscious message objectionable on moral or other grounds.

What is the hostess, this lovely young blonde creature in her pink slack suit, doing? She is obviously listening and considering. But specifically what is she listening to and what is she considering?

She is the only woman in the room with a wedding ring apparent. Several hundred test subjects agreed the man she is talking to is not her husband. The man is speaking close to her face, confidentially, certainly something not intended to be heard by anyone else in the room. His hands in his pockets suggest he is still somewhat unsure of himself. He is, however, making some kind of a proposal, perhaps a proposition. The hostess is, apparently, considering the possibility.

The hostess's husband is likely the man standing in the upper left background wearing a light green suit. The informal suit would more closely match the informal pink hostess slacks. The man bending over and biting the sandwich is not likely the husband, as our man who is proposing might be overheard by a husband so close.

Now, where is the central male figure's wife? Our test subjects could find no woman in the room who could be identified with this man, whom we will refer to as the *lone wolf*. There are nine people apparently at the party, five men and four women (two are reflected in the mirror). The lone wolf is the odd man who is certainly not out.

*Time* male readers will identify with this lone wolf and female readers with the hostess. Considering the ages, experience levels, affluence, and sophistication implied by the models, who could resist projecting into such a delightfully adulterous situation?

The hostess, though she is certainly considering the possibility, has not yet made up her mind. Her mirror reflection suggests there is an invisible side to her personality, invisible at least to everyone in the room and particularly to her husband, who is not even looking. The horizontal line separating

mirror sections covers her wedding ring. Hidden from view, her inner self is free of the restraints imposed by the symbolic wedding band.

The hostess's inner struggle, if you can call it a struggle, is seen by the unconscious in the drawing on the wall above her head—the white area. In the drawing, obscure though the figures are, appears a man looking down upon a nude woman who stands with her hands clasped and her arms stretched over her head, reflecting her hidden thoughts. What married woman could resist identification with a most attractive hostess receiving the flattering attention of a handsome male—who because of his expensive suit and ease of conversation, mark him occupationally as an executive or professional.

Peripheral symbolism in the photograph reinforces the subliminal message. Ice tongs, the perennial castration symbol, are still on the ice bucket. Had our hostess been holding these tongs at the time of the picture, the idea that she had accepted the proposition would have been communicated. The lady would have decided to put a horn into her husband. But, she is still only considering the possibility.

The three glasses filled with drinks are curious, especially as no one in the room is holding a drink—an odd omission in a liquor advertisement. If gender could be assigned to the glasses, the two with large, heavy ice cubes (two in each glass) would likely be male. The glass with three smaller ice cubes symbolizes the female. One male glass appears to be moving between the male and female glass—the eternal triangle represented in ice cubes. Cool?

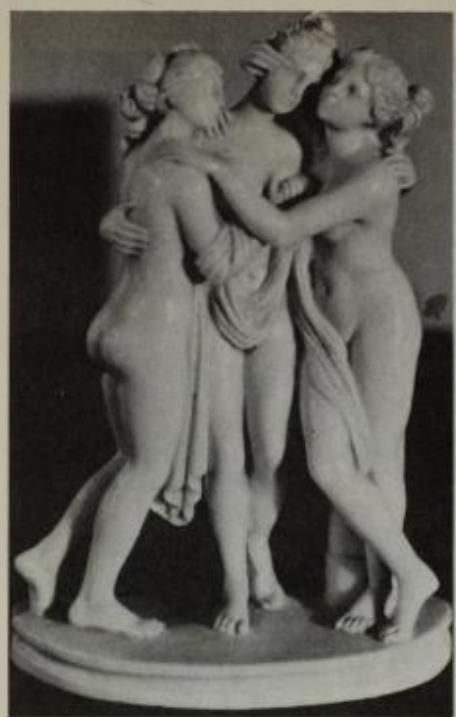
And how is all this exciting, adulterous, and worldly adventure brought about? Simple. The three bottles of Seagram's—phallic symbols with their caps off—are ready to pour additional drinks and speed up the action.

All this happy intrigue has its source in Seagram's Canadian and Scotch whiskeys and in its London Dry Gin—in effect, the source of life—and, of course, the pleasant prospect of infidelity. Once our hostess has had a drink of Seagram's, she may warm up to lone wolf's proposition.

The photographer-artist who put this ad together was a superb technician. The production budget could have ranged between \$15,000 and \$20,000. With a cast of nine models, probably working for several days at fees ranging from \$75 to \$150 each per hour, the story may have required several days for the photographer to achieve the precise results re-



Figure 1



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**



**Figure 7**



**Figure 6**





Figure 8

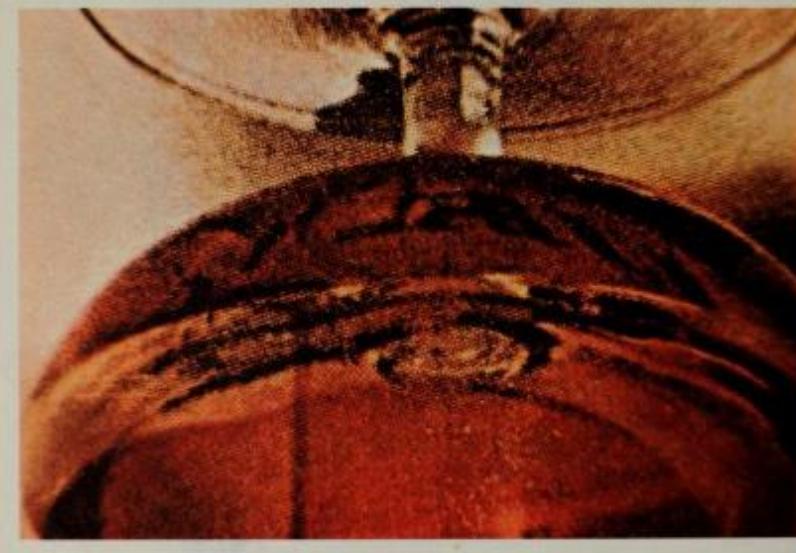


Figure 8A



Figure 9



Figure 9A



Figure 10



Figure 10A



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14

Figure 17



Figure 15

Figure 15A



# Soft Whiskey à la mode.

The hardest thing about it is the rocks.

© 1968 W.H. CALVERT & SONS, INC., NEW YORK. CALVERT WHISKEY IS PRODUCED BY THE W.H. CALVERT & SONS, INC., NEW YORK. CALVERT WHISKEY IS PRODUCED BY THE W.H. CALVERT & SONS, INC., NEW YORK.

Figure 16



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 20A

ARDANARI STUDIO INC.



Figure 22



Figure 22A



Figure 21



Figure 21A



Figure 21B



Figure 23



Figure 23B



Figure 23A

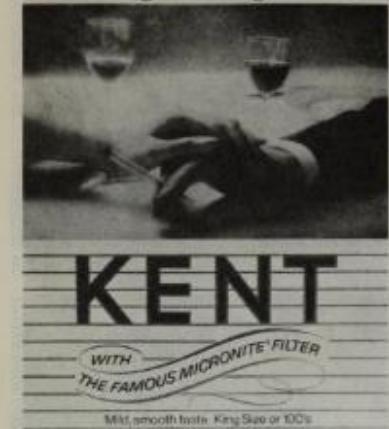


Figure 24



Figure 24A



Figure 26



Figure 25



Figure 25A



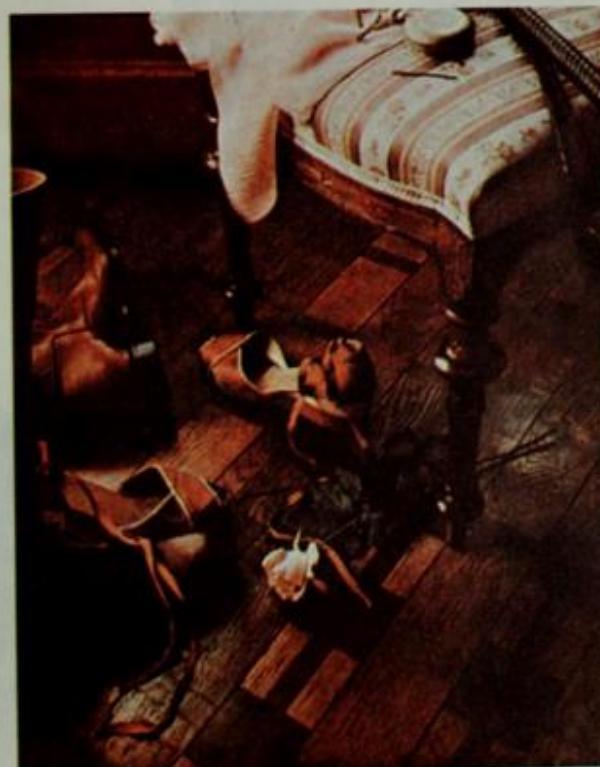
Figure 26A



Figure 27



Figure 27A



Tweed again.



Left...and the coming to power  
of the '70's...  
All you can have...  
all you can be.

© 1970  
Condé Nast Publications Inc.

Figure 28

quired. Considering what is at stake—at least \$1.4 million in Seagram sales—the ad cost was probably a bargain.

### *Subliminal Gender*

Ice cubes likely sell more alcohol for the distilling industry than attractive models in cheesecake poses. The inconspicuous ice cubes often hide the invisible sell—invisible, that is, to the conscious mind.

The Cinzano ad is a simple, perhaps typical demonstration of subliminal technique in ice cubes—two colors on a quarter page of *Time* at a cost per insertion in the world edition of \$4,175 (see Figure 4). Study the Cinzano ad and see for yourself how it earns its keep.

As in most advertising, few readers are likely to assimilate the copy. The art usually carries all the motivational stimuli. The copy, if read, reinforces the message communicated by the artwork—an added bonus for the advertiser.

Readers of the Cinzano ad are not actually looking at an ice cube—only an artist's representation of an ice cube. It is impossible to photograph ice under hot floodlights. And besides, ice will never look exactly like what the artist needs for the ad to do its job. A good retouch artist can complete the design within the cube, planting a variety of unidentifiable designs to gently stimulate and lead the consumer's fantasies and dreams. When presented with a *nonspecific, nondirective* design, people will often put into it meaning which reflects their unconscious motives, hang-ups, or desires. This is the underlying principle of the Rorschach inkblot test.

Within the multidimensional Cinzano ice cubes the designs can mean virtually anything the reader wishes to fantasize and project. Projections, however, quite often involve some form of sexual fantasy. In the Cinzano cubes the artist has included subtle cues which will lead the reader, at both the conscious and unconscious levels, to interpret male or female genital symbols, breasts, nude couples, animals—the possibilities are endless. Cinzano probably really doesn't care what meaning is projected into the cubes as long as it attracts the reader's attention and holds his eye on the ad as long as possible so the subliminal sell can take effect.

Once the reader's attention is focused on the cubes via his unconscious projections into the nondirective fantasy designs, hidden persuaders go to work.

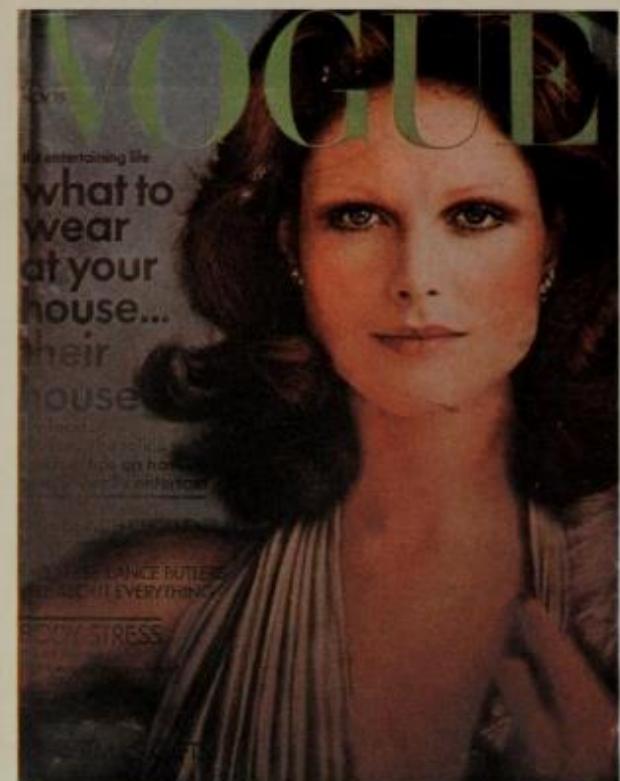


Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 30A

Humans unconsciously, and sometimes consciously, identify symbolic representations with gender—male and female. Though some symbols are intercultural in gender, culture often determines the subliminally implied gender of a symbol. In America, for example, a boat is generally feminine, as are many automobiles and other power-oriented symbolic substitutes for sex. Designers usually imply in automobiles, furniture, appliances, and even airplanes, either male or female characteristics.

The famous Lockheed Constellation, with its three vertical stabilizers, was designed as a female image—and it turned out to be the singularly most successfully sold airliner ever turned off a production line. The competitive Douglas DC-4, with its single vertical stabilizer—strongly masculine—was a successful military transport but never was nearly as successful among the world's commercial airlines as the Connie. Lockheed executives believed the Constellation design for commercial airline travelers related to a feminine or maternal image, suggesting security. There was no aerodynamic benefit derived from either the three- or one-piece vertical stabilizer. Technically they were identical. Symbolically, however, they were vastly different. Gender can be subliminally important in every object around us in modern society.

Linguistically, gender is not consciously used anymore in English, though masculine and feminine nouns are an important part of Latin-derived languages—Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese. Nevertheless, even among English-speaking peoples who do not specifically use gender, sex is vitally important as we label and describe objects in our unconscious. Why not ice cubes?

Thinking in terms of male and female, which of the two Cinzano ice cubes would be female? The one on the left, of course; at least it was so designated by over 90 percent of a thousand test subjects. The elliptical-shaped chip at the top corner of the left-hand ice cube suggests something is missing—a portion of the cube's anatomy. The cube on the right is therefore masculine. Observe the top area of the right-hand cube. A phallic symbol has been painted into the surface. The long, cylindrical shape points directly at the chip in the cube at left. Hundreds of test subjects unanimously made these female-male identifications for the cubes without being able to consciously specify why they should be female and male.

Now ask, what is going on between this female and male

set of ice cubes? The drops of water or melted ice, actually painted in by an artist, suggest the cubes are melting or warming up. More drops appear beneath the female cube than beneath the male. Obviously the female is warming up faster than the male.

And how did the ice cubes get turned on? Cinzano, of course. Even considering seriously the old jokes about frigid women, or men for that matter, being "ice cubes"—much credit must be given to the American advertising industry for its success in creating a sexual affair between two pieces of ice as a subliminal device with which to merchandise a liqueur. The ad must have sold thousands of gallons of Cinzano, as it was repeated many times in a wide variety of American publications.

Whether the consumers who responded to the Cinzano appeal were any more hung up, or frigid if you will, than the general U.S. population can only be a matter of conjecture. But the ad works on the promise of turning off frigidity. Anything that can turn on a piece of ice—Cinzano included—can't be all bad.

### *Peer Deeply Into My Ad*

The Gilbey's Black Velvet Canadian whiskey advertisement appeared in a large number of North American magazines during the winter of 1971 (see Figure 15).

The basic symbolic content is simple and obvious. The long, phallic, cylindrical shape of the black container stands close against the female, open, elliptical-rimmed vaginal symbol of the glass. This archetypal male-female symbolic design is certain to attract the reader's attention.

There is much, much more at the subliminal level. The ad is black, dark, conveying a tactile experience of smooth velvet. All smooth textures may be regarded as symbolic of remoteness and, by analogy, also cold colors. Conversely, porous textures symbolize nearness, as do warm colors. The advertisement was published during the winter months when most of North America was dark, overcast, somewhat depressing, and people were living inside their homes.

So what is subliminally promised the potential purchaser of Gilbey's Black Velvet? Look carefully into the whiskey glass.

Two figures, a man at left and a woman at right, are standing on a tropical beach as they watch a magnificent sun-

set. One of the heavy tropical clouds above the figures appears to be a sailboat cruising smoothly before the wind at dusk as it passes the magical island. The subliminal content is certainly remote from the winter North American environment.

The subliminal message is simple: Gilbey's will transport you and your male or female romantic interest to a tropical island far away from the cold, depressing, and restricting North American winter. You can take the trip for only the price of a fifth of Black Velvet.

The inside back cover of *Time* was purchased by Chivas Regal Scotch to display its massive bottle with the tissue-paper wrapper torn away (see Figure 5). The innocuous appearing ad would hardly be noticed at the conscious level by the average *Time* reader. Virtually all readers, nevertheless, who perceived the ad for even an instant would have its subliminal message registered deeply in their psyches, even though only 42 percent of adult male *Time* readers are regular Scotch drinkers. This is a high level of Scotch consumption, as only 10.2 percent of the total adult male population account for 90.8 percent of all adult male Scotch consumption in the United States.

The question, of course, is how the *Time* ad manages to sell several million dollars' worth of Chivas Regal, one of the most expensive Scotch whiskeys in the American market. The copy line at the top and bottom of the page is directed at the readers' "friends" who won't think less of them but will certainly think more of them if they serve Chivas Regal. The question the ad subliminally poses for the readers' psyches is simply: Who are these friends?

Market research on Scotch drinkers revealed that individuals who drink Chivas Regal rarely serve it to friends. At best, these Scotch drinkers, even those at the very high income level of over \$25,000 per year, will keep Chivas Regal for only their very best friends, clients, or special guests whom they are trying to impress. Chivas drinkers usually keep less expensive brands of Scotch around the house for general guests or casual or lower status visitors.

So who are these "friends" mentioned in the copy who will not think less of you even if you don't serve Chivas? Man's best friend, of course.

Perhaps the easiest way to discover man's best friend is to turn the ad on its side with the top of the bottle to your

right. Relax and look at the paper wrapper. A light colored triangular shape directly above the base of the bottle neck forms an eye. To the left and slightly above the eye, a fold in the wrapper sticks up forming an ear. The wrapper fold at the extreme right, white-shaded, forms a nose, with a horizontal fold providing the line for a mouth. The area just above the large label, where a light appears to be glowing, would be roughly the area of the dog's neck. A dog, probably a German shepherd or collie, is the subliminal *modus operandi* of the Chivas Regal advertisement in *Time*. The ad must work extremely well, as it was frequently reprinted in other publications, such as *The New York Times*, for well over a year.

Small children upon whom this ad has been tested find the illusion absolutely delightful. It is doubtful these children will be converted to Chivas Regal drinkers, but the hidden dog does provoke their attention and laughter. The dog (especially subliminal dogs) appears to provide an unconscious stimulus for the purchase of alcohol. Traditionally in our culture the symbolic archetype of the dog has meant affection, companionship, courage, devotion, and fidelity. Faithful love and friendship are frequently mentioned as basic qualities of the dog symbolism in medieval Christian art. A white dog is a happy omen. The dog has long been believed to hold supernatural powers. Presumably these symbolic archetypal meanings are buried in the unconscious of all of us. The dog is one of the richest and most complicated of animal archetypes—especially in North America where, as people have become more and more alienated from one another, they have developed an increasing emotional dependency upon dogs, enough to support a multimillion dollar, high-profit market for the sale of dog food. An often noted characteristic of American life, commented upon by foreign visitors, is the status of American dogs who often receive more affection and loyalty than is bestowed upon people.

Animals appear to play important roles in our unconscious. The anthropomorphism (giving human attributes to animals) of animated cartoon, in children's fairy tales and folk stories, and in such things as Halloween costumes and masks is hardly mere random accident. Animal faces appear subliminally in many of the illustrations included in the book. On the frosted Gilbey's gin bottle (Figure 1) appear numerous animal faces; most seem to be dogs. A most unusual application of sub-

liminal animal symbolism, however, was applied in the *Esquire* advertisement for Coca-Cola's Sprite (see Figure 6).

The ad was aimed at the older, affluent male readership. The bottle, opened and covered with condensation, is symbolic of the reader's erect, virile, male phallus. The cap, wet, glistening with water (semen) drops, and bent—having been removed from the bottle with great force—emphasizes the symbolization of strength and power, aggression and dominance. These more obvious symbolic constructions in the ad are sex-packed and should, by themselves, sell Sprite by the tank-carload. Coca-Cola's ad department, however, is taking no chance that the ad might not trigger a purchase motivation.

Relax again and look deeply into the almost hypnotic organization of bubbles surrounding the lime slice. Something rather strange is going on in the bubbles.

The ear, an orifice of the human body, suggests that the effervescence rising from the glass may have aphrodisiac qualities, at least at the symbolic level, especially with the two-balled earring with one ball hanging lower than the other. Something highly symbolic is, indeed, going on in the bubbles above the lime slice. Before reading further, try to psych out the ice cubes in the glass. What is Sprite trying to tell you?

The right side of the ice cube above the lime slice forms the back of an animal—a large shaggy dog with a pointed nose, or quite possibly a polar bear. The animal's legs are extended outward to the left, parallel with the top of the lime. The animal's arms (or legs, as you will) appear to be holding another figure which is human with long, feminine hair. Her face is located just above the animal's head.

The two figures, animal and human, are in what can only be described as a sexual intercourse position. The polar bear, dog, or whatever, is in sexual embrace with a nude woman.

Bestiality may be illegal throughout most of the world, but, at the symbolic level, it appears to have sold a lot of Sprite. The Coca-Cola Sprite advertisement was designed to sell around a subliminal theme of highly taboo sex.

### *A Symbolic Nightmare*

The full-page, four-color Calvert whiskey advertisement in the October 1971 *Playboy* appears to have ushered in a new trend in subliminal manipulative technique that might well

have originated in medieval witchcraft—which, of course, all of us know was pure nonsense, based upon sheer ignorance and superstition (see Figure 16).

Before proceeding, study carefully the Calvert ad for several minutes while relaxed. Try to understand how the ad makes you feel. Then briefly write out these feelings so you can check back later on how you reacted before the analysis.

The bottom of the glass contains a cone-shaped volcano from which the whiskey and ice appear to have erupted. The volcano is an ancient symbol of fertility, in that volcanic earth is the world's most fertile soil. However, the volcano and its destructive fire are also linked with the idea of evil, symbolic not only of nature's primary force (creation), but of the fire of life (destruction). The volcano represents the passions which control our energies, a sudden and frightening eruption (orgasm) preceded by an extended time of internal, enclosed, intensifying pressure.

And, what has erupted from the Calvert volcano? Life, of course, symbolized in the golden richness of Calvert Extra Blended Whiskey. Gold, the symbol of divine intelligence, all that is superior, spiritual determination, hidden or elusive treasures, and supreme insight and wisdom would naturally be the color of Calvert.

Just to the left of the volcano's erupting crater is a fish, swimming in the golden sea of Calvert whiskey. The fish has been symbolically known as the mystic ship of life, phallically penetrating the water as it swims, spiritually symbolic of the relationship between heaven and earth, the life force surging upward, and the spiritual world that lies beneath the illusionary visual world. Christ was often symbolized as a fish.

A mouse, however, appears to be riding the fish, its eyes and nose facing the rear of the fish, its tail curved up over its back across the large right ear. The large ear suggests a mouse rather than a rat. The mouse in medieval symbolism was often associated with the devil. Symbolically, the devil is looking back upon where the fish or life force has swum. To the left and above the mouse's head, in the bottom left-hand corner of the ice cube, is the sun, its rays shining down, penetrating the golden Calvert sea of life and its inhabitants.

In the cold, dead world above Calvert's ocean of life, however, is another story. Just to the left of the sun appears a skull, the brain case marked with wavy lines, the jaws open and foreboding. The skull, of course, is symbolic of man's

mortality, that which survives his being once his life and body have disappeared.

To the right, frozen into the ice cube above the golden liquid, are scorpions. The scorpion for thousands of years has symbolized the period of man's existence in which he is threatened by death. In medieval Christian art the scorpion was utilized as a symbol for treachery.

Three wolf faces appear above the scorpions. One face is to the left of the bell-shaped white space at the top of the ice cube. The nose points down at a 45 degree angle toward the bottom right corner of the cube face; the two eyes—teardrop shaped—point up and out toward the animal's ears. Behind or above and to the left of the wolf is another wolf face supported by a long neck. The second wolf appears to be biting the ear or neck of the wolf in front. To the right of the white space is the third wolf's head, the two eyes staring forward on each side of a triangular nose pointing down.

The wolf has appeared in Western culture for centuries as symbolic of evil, often a power enclosed in the bowels of the earth which at the end of the world would break free and devour the sun. The wolf myth has been related to the final annihilation of the world by fire and water.

Just to the left of the top left corner of the scorpion cube is the head of a rat, its head turned sideways, the nose pointing to the right, two ears and eyes to the left of the pointed nose. Only the head is visible, suggesting the rat may be swimming in the gray fluid symbolic of the life force which fills the ice cube and is draining out from the bottom corner of the cube on top of the skull. Gray, the color of volcanic ashes, or perhaps amniotic fluid, is symbolic of the earth and vegetation, depression, inertia, and indifference which is leaking out of the ice cube onto the surface of life.

Along the glass rim, to the right of the gray cube, is a lizard. The lizard often symbolizes distrust when it appears in dreams and often typifies one who is cold-blooded, groveling, and morally contemptible. In Japanese legends the lizard has symbolized a revengeful spirit with supernatural powers.

The top ice cube in the foreground, on the left, holds a mythological menagerie. If the cube is turned upside down—remember, the unconscious can read upside down, even mirror images—the head of a shark appears, with eyes and tooth-jagged jaws pointing to the left. Symbolic of danger, death, and evil, the shark as an archetype has been around

since long before man; it is one of the earth's oldest creatures.

Just below the upside-down shark, a white bird appears in the ice cube, its head pointing down at the lower left corner of the cube. Birds have frequently symbolized human souls and carriers of the dead to paradise. In particular, the white bird is an archetypal symbol for the soul of the righteous. The white bird is upside down, or dead, in the Calvert ice cube.

To the right of the dead white bird, under the upside-down shark, appears a white mask which is an ancient symbol of deception, hypocrisy, and—in dreams—betrayal and lies. In Chinese drama a white mask represents a cunning and treacherous person.

Another mask, this one a full-face mask with a grotesque expression, appears below and to the right of the white mask, in the upper corner of the ice cube side panel facing down and to the right. The upper portion, eyes and nose, are colored brown. The lower portion of the face is white.

In the upper ice cube at the rear is another fish—the head facing left in the upper left corner—which seems to have an angry expression on its face. Beneath the fish is a form that eight out of ten test subjects identified as a white bird in flight; the head faces left, with a long neck extending to the body. A curved white line across the top of the body represents a wing in flight. The bird could be a swan. A flying bird archetypally symbolizes the flight of the soul to heaven.

Just below the swan's neck appear two dark areas, almost like eyes. Below these eyes is a small white knob that could be a nose. The white area seen above as a bird now becomes the top of a head—the bird's head becoming the left ear, the beginning of the bird's wing the right ear. The mouth of what has been unanimously identified by test subjects as a grinning white cat is partially hidden behind the distorted rim of the glass as it appears through the ice cube. The white cat is an ancient Christian symbol of laziness, lust, cruelty, egoism, flattery, treachery, and witchcraft.

It appears that Calvert Extra Blended Whiskey has a greater kick in it than anyone ever suspected. The fine details in the advertisement, including dozens of embedded SEXes in a mosaic, must have required hundreds of hours of labor by the artist. Embedding technique will be discussed in the next chapter, after which the reader should carefully review the Calvert—as well as the other ads—in this chapter. The

painting, if accomplished outside the advertising frame of reference, might even be considered a masterpiece. Only the painting's major symbolic devices have been commented on here. There are many more, however, which readers may discover for themselves.

In all fairness, symbol analysis is a tricky business. Jung and many other experienced analysts continuously warned sternly against glib symbolic interpretations. Symbols have highly individual meanings in specific contexts. The object of advertising is sales, however, not psychotherapy. Advertising artists must apply symbolism likely to have wide similar meanings throughout their target markets. The interpretations of Calvert's ad were reviewed for variations in meaning with a panel of individuals and general consensus obtained on meanings before any single interpretation was accepted. This, of course, represents only a reasonable conscious interpretation of meaning. We can only speculate on the interpretations at the unconscious level. This does not mean, in any respect, that each reader would attribute precisely identical meaning or significance to these complex symbols—fish, scorpion, wolf, lizard, etc.

The interpretations presented here were reviewed against several major authoritative sources on symbolic meanings. Should any reader have a more lively, or more deeply involving conscious interpretation for any of the symbolism discussed in this book, he is urged to utilize his own meaning hypothesis for an explanation of the ad's effectiveness.

In the Calvert ad, it is absolutely certain that not more than one percent, if that many, of the over 20 million people who saw the ad consciously recognized the symbolic content. Indeed, one percent is a very high estimate for conscious cognition for any ad's symbolism. A medieval mentality would probably have recognized, at the conscious level, most of the symbolism instantly. Modern man, however, has been subjected to a very long, intensive socialization process during which he has learned to repress his conscious response to symbolic content. The Calvert ad symbolism, nevertheless, will register instantly within the unconscious of virtually everyone who perceives the ad anywhere in the Western culture—and very likely in Eastern cultures as well.

In attempting to penetrate meaning parameters in any symbolic media, the first step is to recognize the individual symbols and their meanings in the specific context. The sec-

ond step is to synthesize the individual meanings into a whole to obtain a thematic meaning.

When the individual symbols are lumped together into one composite message, the Calvert ad communicated a fascinating concept into the unconscious psyches of many millions of readers—young and old, rich and poor, drinkers and non-drinkers. The thematic meaning of the Calvert ad is birth, life, and death—birth from the volcano, life in the golden sea of Calvert whiskey, and death through betrayal and degradation within the hard frozen ice cubes. Earlier a theory was developed that symbols are organized around the two polarities of human existence—the *origin* and the *end* of life. Most advertising focuses upon the origin of life, love, or—in the vulgar *Playboy* fantasy—sex. The Calvert ad covers the entire symbolic spectrum and, apparently, has successfully merchandised the product. The ad was published numerous times in several national media, including *Life* magazine with 7.5 million copies and 21 million readers.

That this advertisement was successful in selling whiskey is beyond question. The four-color page space rate in *Playboy* alone is nearly \$40,000. No one fools around indiscriminately with \$40,000, except possibly people in government. No businessman could tolerate unsuccessful advertising expenditures for a moment.

One question, then, remains to be considered in relation to the successful Calvert advertisement. *What does the ad do to the psyches of the over 40 million people who presumably perceived the colorful menagerie of death just in Playboy and Life magazines—especially those readers who have not yet taken a drink?*

Though directed only at the 4.5 percent of all adult men who consume four or more drinks of blended whiskey a week (heavy users), who account for 71.8 percent of all blended whiskey consumed by men, the ad was also perceived by millions of other people who do not drink, or at least did not drink until then. The Calvert Distilling Company has, one can be quite certain, pretest data on the advertisements. Perhaps a congressional investigating committee should ask for all the data it has collected on the social effects of such advertising.

According to the theory, either sex or death symbolism should work as a device by which to circumvent consciously discriminating perception. Throughout his history, man's major preoccupation has been with death, not sex. True, the

population increase might be at least partially attributable to sex symbolism. However, man has worshipped death in his steady and brilliant development of weapons, elaborate rituals, and magnificent religious institutions, in the names of a hundred gods—burial temples from Egyptian pyramids to Hollywood's Forest Lawn Cemetery. Death has certainly provided mankind with a major preoccupation through thousands of years of history, during which he worked diligently to find ways in which his fear of death could be repressed, suppressed, or at least hidden temporarily from his constant conscious awareness.

New research now going on in the advertising industry is investigating the subliminal manipulability of man through death symbolism. So far, relatively few death-oriented ads have appeared in American media. Sex has worked well for a very long time, but may be approaching a saturation point where its effectiveness has begun to decrease. Many research directors feel the SEX embeds may be losing their sell.

### *Death in the Cocktail Hour*

The Bacardi on-the-rocks ads, which has appeared in *Playboy* as well as several other national media, may be one of the early examples of this new trend in American advertising toward death symbolism as a *modus operandi* for sales (see Figure 17).

The cocktail glass is covered with the conventional SEX subliminal mosaic. In the ice cubes, at the top, are masks, a cat face, a fish, a rabbit, and other animals. These symbols are located above the liquid in the ice cubes—the usual symbolic menagerie, most of which is death-associated. You might test your own skill by finding and identifying the various symbols utilized. The bat, part of the Bacardi trademark, has a curious archetypal significance. The bat is symbolic of black magic, darkness, madness, and, in dreams, peril and torment. A bat flying about a house (the bat on the Bacardi label is flying) is a death warning, the wings archetypally signifying the power of darkness.

The primary symbolic device, subliminally perceived in the Bacardi ad, appears at first glance to be an ice cube in the center bottom of the glass. Look more carefully. The ice cube is a golden skull with a flattened nose, large eye sockets, and jagged teeth.

Gold, in Western culture, traditionally symbolizes great

happiness and prosperity; the skull symbolizes death, mortality, and transitoriness. The thematic implication in both the color and skull symbolism implies that one might richly enjoy dying if well fortified with Bacardi rum or, quite possibly, Bacardi will serve to protect the drinker from a fear of death. If a rational, though symbolic, argument will sell rum, this one should really make the grade more dramatically than sex ever did.

## 6. Sex is Alive and Embedded in Practically Everything

Embedding refers generally to the practice of hiding emotionally loaded words or pictures in the backgrounds of ads. Embedded words and picture illusions are part of most advertising throughout North America today. These subliminal stimuli, though invisible to conscious perception, are perceived instantly at the unconscious level by virtually everyone who perceives them even for an instant!

Most national advertising includes embedding. Retail or local ad layouts may not have the facilities, as their artists and writers either do not know about subliminal techniques or they lack the skill and craftsmanship required to do the work well. Every major advertising agency has at least one embedding technician in its art department. The technique is taught in most commercial art schools.

*Playboy* magazine displays monthly some of the most skillful examples of subliminally embedded art. All other major national publications with advertising, as well as television, also use the technique.

SEX is the most frequently embedded word in the American advertising industry. Multidimensional printing techniques permit advertising artists to plant taboo emotional words dozens of times in a single layout. Words such as fuck, cunt, ass, whore, prick, and death are also used frequently as subliminal triggers to motivate purchasing behavior.

Embedding can be accomplished by an artist, who paints the illusion in over ice cubes and other props or designs in the layout. Photographically, embedding is even easier to accomplish. Consider the apparent limits to human perception of light reflection:

There is a narrow range of reflected light between A and I which affects only the unconscious and cannot usually be seen by the conscious mind. Within this range, emotionally loaded words can be inserted into an advertisement for communication with a reader's unconscious. Recall from the earlier theoretical discussion that humans can be assumed to have at least two sensory input systems, one incoding data at the conscious level and a second operating at a level below conscious awareness.

A photographer takes a photograph of a model and props. They are photographed at say 1/150th of a second. A double exposure can then be made at 1/1000th of a second in which only the word SEX is photographed as a faint impression across some portion of the original picture. The word SEX can be interwoven into a mosaic such as in the *Playboy* centerfold where virtually every square inch of the model's body is mosaiced with SEXes.

Another embedding technique involves painting the SEX mosaic on the photoengraving plate with asphaltum and briefly immersing the plate in acid where the words are lightly etched across the plate. This is probably the technique used on centerfolds.

Some readers will see the embedded SEXes instantly. Most readers will require several weeks to learn how to relax their perception to the point where embeds become immediately apparent. A few readers will, unfortunately, never be able to expand their conscious awareness to the point where they will become consciously sensitive to subliminal stimuli.

Once any individual learns to relax and focus attention, however, a whole new world of perception awaits him, even though much of what he will perceive in the mass media may be profoundly disturbing. A basic fact of human existence is that humans perceive just about what they want to perceive—at least at the conscious level. Mass merchandisers have known this a long time. The general public is incredibly ignorant of perceptual phenomena—and perhaps it has been kept that way on purpose.

It is entirely possible, for example, for an individual to project SEXes into clouds, or anywhere else for that matter. It is also entirely possible for a skilled artist to embed SEXes into advertisements or into virtually anything. The author was recently interviewed by a textile manufacturer who was looking for a way to embed SEXes into pantyhose, ties, shirts, and even window curtains. Merchandisers' illusions de-

pend upon consumers who cannot be certain whether the SEXes are their own creation or that of the merchandiser.

The author's photograph on the dust jacket of this book was taken against a background of drapes. A careful, relaxed study of these drapes will reveal a mosaic of SEXes woven into the fabric. The effect of this subliminal stimuli may well have been to manipulate the reader into purchasing *Subliminal Seduction*.

As long as consumers are uncertain, should they detect subliminal stimuli they will logically assume they are imagining things and pass the notion off without a second conscious thought. People in North America have been culturally trained to believe in the inherent honesty of their governmental and commercial institutions. They find it very difficult, if not impossible, to believe anyone would do anything as outrageous as these subliminals. They will usually seek out someone else, someone more logically guilty of misleading them, upon whom to heap their anger over the betrayal. They will be helped in this, of course, by the merchandisers and the culture controlled by merchandisers. Marshall McLuhan expressed this behavioral pattern well when he commented that his critics have blamed him for starting the fire when he only turned in the alarm.

### *The Discovery Shock*

As an individual becomes aware of subliminal phenomena, the shock may cause him some initial physical or emotional discomfort—possibly even concern over his sanity. Most insanity in our culture has a common definitional denominator in that the insane see, hear, and experience things that are not participated in by the so-called sane. It can be most unsettling when you cannot make others sensitive or consciously aware of subliminal stimuli you see quite clearly. Consensus or peer group support for perception is culturally very important to an individual's security or sense of well-being. Humans tend to repress information they perceive which is not immediately reinforced by their peers, as it threatens their self-image as a sane, or socially acceptable, individual within their society.

As mentioned before, some individuals are so defensively up tight, they could never see embeds or even the much more obvious symbolism. Should these few be forced to concede the existence of subliminally affective symbolic patterns, they

would probably refuse to concede their significance. "OK," they will conclude, "the tricks or illusions are there. We admit it. But there is no evidence to prove they do anything to people."

The whole thing is a very neat, very tight, and very powerful puzzle which has been the subject of much philosophical debate during at least the 2,000 recorded years of our intellectual history. It seems almost macabre that mass merchandisers were the first to make a practical application of what had always appeared to be obscure, hairsplitting, and merely theoretical nonsense indulged in only by philosophers. Many individuals today maintain the great thinkers in our intellectual heritage were men who contributed little but confusion to the world, in which they indulged themselves with seemingly endless and worthless arguments. Today we even use the term *philosophical* to describe an argument we consider to be worthless nonsense.

Even though college students are hardly representative of North America's population, fewer than one out of ten students were unable to penetrate subliminal illusions after several weeks of study and discussion. Many, who at first were horrified at the possibility that such machinations were going on, over a period of time began to find subliminals on their own. Perhaps self-discovery techniques are really the best way to communicate information. Never, however, underestimate the phenomenon of perceptual defenses—the excluding of perceived data from conscious awareness, often described as a basic mechanism of culture. Consumer orientation, of course, is a powerful and pervasive form of cultural conditioning.

A cultural anthropologist living in a primitive culture—say in a Brazilian or New Guinea jungle or perhaps in the Arctic—appears to the people among whom he lives as very troubled, possibly insane. He cannot fulfill social, economic, cultural, religious, sexual, and other similar expectations in the primitive society. His behavior is odd and inexplicable in the extreme to everyone around him. His symbolic programming would appear to primitive peoples much as someone labeled a psychotic or schizophrenic would appear in a modern North American society. The anthropologist, in order to do his work, must live in a society which considers him emotionally disturbed. Margaret Mead, Claude Levi-Strauss, Bronislaw Malinowski, and many other anthropologists have commented upon this bewildering and sometimes traumatic

experience—that precise moment when the full realization struck them that the society in which they were living looked upon them as totally mad. They perceived things going on around them that no one else perceived. The primitives, in turn, perceived things that were completely invisible to the anthropologists.

The experience often results in what some researchers have called a psychic rebirth—a totally new cultural perspective for the anthropologist or scientist, a position from which he can deal with cultures, even his own, without becoming emotionally dependent or committed to the various mythologies.

It may speak well for the tolerance, patience, and simple humanity often found among primitive peoples that more anthropologists have not abruptly ended their careers as objects of public execution, long-term penal imprisonment, or perhaps even lifelong incarceration in the primitive society's counterpart of our mental institutions. Should an anthropologist from a primitive society attempt to live in and study our twentieth-century world, he would be removed from public view, taken into protective custody, or, if he defensively reacted quite normally to the aggressions and hostilities within modern North America, he could end up being punished as a homicidal maniac.

Several dentists and physicians have compared the technique of bringing the embedded words into the conscious mind with reading an X-ray film. Apparently a similar technique is learned and used by doctors as they probe vague, obscure shadows in a film which—when sensitively transposed into information—can reveal dimensions of meaning invisible to a casual observer. The physicians are taught that tension or distraction while reading an X ray can block their perception of what they are seeing, very possibly resulting in their consciously missing the vital shadow. Many physicians have commented that every so often they have experienced discomfort after reading an X ray and not finding what they had reason to suspect should have appeared. Several hours or even days later they have taken another look and almost immediately seen the detail they had previously missed. This could well be an example of the unconscious mechanism in action.

Medical students spend months learning to read X-ray film. They are trained to relax and concentrate their attention upon one small area of the X-ray film at a time. As

medical students, they may spend several years learning to probe the one-dimensional photographs which represent the multidimensional realities of the body expressed in countless subtle variations of black to white shadows—many invisible to untrained conscious perceptual capabilities. Though many physicians squirm uncomfortably at mention of the unconscious, it is quite possible they have been trained to make themselves consciously sensitive to the delicate powers of perceptual discrimination available through the unconscious.

### *Sex in Time, Saves . . .*

Attempting to trace the origin of the SEX embedding technique is comparable to searching for the proverbial needle in a haystack full of *Playboy* models. Freud's pioneer work on the concept of a subconscious occurred within this century. The notion, however, that there is a hidden power or something within the mind, spirit, soul, or what have you which guides men's destinies, has been discussed by metaphysicians and epistemological philosophers for many centuries. Indeed, as was mentioned earlier, Democritus in 400 B.C. described what post-Freudians would probably call the subconscious or unconscious.

There is a temptation to look for some secret society which through countless generations handed down the mystic secret of embedded SEXes. Master artists and craftsmen, perhaps, whispered the secret to their most favored apprentices as they struggled for their last breath on their deathbed. The apprentices might have sworn not to betray the power of embedded SEXes until they had, in turn, trained another to carry on the tradition.

Canadian artist John Hock once mentioned during a discussion of word embeds that he had used the embedding technique several years before on a painting. After completing an abstraction of curved forms, on an impulse he painted into the background the word fuck (see Figure 22). He disguised the word in background shadows. During the two years the painting hung in his living room no one ever discovered the four-letter word embedded in the background—not even his wife.

Hock commented, however, that people who visited the house were fascinated by the painting. Often, visitors could not seem to take their eyes off the canvas. The embedded

word, he explained, "appeared to give a magic quality to the painting."

John Hock insisted he had never been aware of another artist embedding words, had never read or heard of the technique before his experiment with the "fuck." In his own words, he was "just fooling around."

It is entirely possible that Titian, Rembrandt, Picasso, and others also discovered simply by accident that embedded words produced a strange effect upon art patrons. Examples of word-embedding are abundant in the so-called fine arts. Several Fine Art students who were studying subliminal techniques secretly embedded words, pictures, and symbols in their classroom painting and sculpture, with startling effect. Their work was consistently graded *A* by their art professor when subliminals were included. One student, enthusiastic but a little guilty over her discovery, tried to explain to her professor what she had done—which was to embed the word "cunt" in an abstract sculpture. The professor refused to believe that such a technique could possibly affect anyone who "really understood art." The professor vehemently criticized the student for having an overactive imagination. Fortunately, the student had already received her *A* on the sculpture.

Another possible explanation for some of the embedded words which appear so often in heretofore inexplicable places is that they are involuntary acts of an artist of which he was totally unaware at the conscious level. During an art-therapy class conducted recently in a mid-Western therapeutic clinic, a young woman was assigned to paint a portrait of herself. The self-portrait showed her with a long-sleeved, high-necked gown—every portion of her body covered except face and hands. Her legs were covered with high boots. The young woman had a chronic and severe history of deeply rooted sexual inhibition.

During the discussion, while her self-projected image was under analysis by the entire group, another member noticed the woman had lightly painted the word "sex" across one of her booted feet. The word was almost imperceptible, but nevertheless represented purposeful behavior by the young woman. Once it was pointed out, the entire class was able to see the "sex."

The young woman went into hysterics after the detail was discovered. She indignantly maintained later she had painted "sex" on the boot without being aware of what she had done.

There is not even an outside chance, however, that major

U.S. media and their advertising agencies have included verbal embeds inadvertently or without full knowledge of what they were doing. These multimillion dollar businesses are not "just fooling around," nor are they indulging their creative departments with on-the-job psychotherapy.

One very large New York advertising agency research director, when confronted with the verbal embeds in a cigarette layout produced by his company, made a strange rationalization for the subliminal trigger words. He reported, with a straight face, that much of his agency's artwork was done by independent contract art producers. These are art production houses which service many of the nation's top ad agencies.

The research director solemnly theorized that somewhere in New York, perhaps working obscurely in the basement of a production house, was a Commie-hippie revolutionist who was putting into American advertising all of these dirty things which, when exposed to an outraged public, would destroy "the great institution of free-enterprise marketing." In other words, he considered the whole thing a communist plot engineered by secret agents working from within.

### *Love—American Style*

Horsman Dolls purchased a full-page, four-color advertisement in *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* on December 12, 1971, just before Christmas (see Figure 10). The ad cost about \$7,500 for space alone, and reached about 1.6 million families—roughly one-third of whom live in New York City, one-third outside the city but within a hundred mile radius, and one-third distributed throughout the United States; 44.3 percent of *The New York Times* reader families have children under eleven years old, and half of them can be assumed female. These families are also well heeled: 64 percent have incomes over \$10,000 per year, 20 percent over \$20,000. They are well educated: 48 percent of male and 29 percent of female readers are college graduates. Some 57 percent of male readers are in managerial-professional occupations. An exhaustive array of data and information were available to the Horsman Doll Company, enabling it to utilize sophisticated planning in the design of its doll advertising campaign.

Dolls are expensive, especially nationally advertised dolls. They are not purchased by children. As with all toy adver-

tising, the main target is adults, though some advertisers will channel the appeal through children who will be urged to subtly pressure and manipulate their parents into the purchase.

"Love—American Style" shows a sweet child, possibly five years old, her hair and expensive dress obviously from an upper-income family, affectionately holding her doll while she lovingly talks to it, probably in baby talk as though the doll were an actual child. The child's eyes are closed (she is blind to reality) while she playacts the doll is a real child. The doll appears to be staring at the child's ear and the hands are about to touch the child's neck. It is particularly curious to observe the use of erogenous zones in children's toy advertising and their relationship to hands, mouths, eyes, and other points of body contact.

This is much the same relationship that held between the mother and the child only a few years earlier. Their lips are close. The doll either has been or soon will be kissed about the mouth and cheeks by the child. Judging from the child's open mouth and wet lips, the kiss will be a sloppy one. The child's left hand, unseen, is very likely positioned under the doll's fanny. A parent might sense a twinge of pleasure and excitement at seeing this charming, loving child at play with her baby doll. The scene might, in itself, evoke strong enough identifications between mother or father and the child with her doll to stimulate a purchase. Horsman, however, is taking no chances.

Embedded on the back of the child's right hand, halfway down from the forefinger knuckle, is a mosaic of SEXes. There is also a SEX mosaic on the inside of the doll's right hand (erogenous zone). On the child's right cheek, just right of the ear, is a large SEX. In the child's hair—from a midpoint in the part go straight down to the light area in her hair—another large SEX, in fact a mosaic. There are dozens of the ubiquitous SEXes throughout the photograph. Bear in mind that, as with all the reproductions in this book, the reduced size and, in most cases, the absence of color make the finding of subliminal material more difficult than in the original ad. But for those who care to look for it, most of the material is discernible.

Perhaps the most interesting embed, however, is on the sleeve of the doll's left arm. From the top of the bare wrist, where the dress sleeve meets the skin, count up the arm four of the horizontal pink stripes. At the top edge of the sleeve,

on the fourth stripe, appears a large letter K. The K is clear, heavy, and obvious. The other letters tend to be shadows or only partial clues; however, the mind at the unconscious level will fill in the taboo four-letter word with assistance from the photographer-artist.

Just in front of the K, and slightly below, is a capital C. Between the second and third horizontal pink stripes is a U. And, drawn across the top of the first stripe is a large F. In the illustration, a blow-up of the area is shown and the letters F U C K unmistakably appear.

Love, indeed, American Style?

## 7. The Playboy Syndrome: Who's Playing With Whom or What or Whose?

Each square inch of each page in a national magazine must do a specific job. The inside editorial content pages must hold readers, laying a psychological foundation for the advertising pages which must sell products. As little as possible is left to chance. Each page layout is purposeful. Each page must serve the corporate motives of the publisher. Some pages, nevertheless, are more important than others.

For many national magazines, the cover—literally an advertisement or the *packaging* for the magazine—is the most critical page in the book. The cover must sell the magazine. The cover's job, similar to the paid advertising inside, is likely to be performed in the mind of potential purchasers in a matter of seconds, even split seconds, as they compare one magazine with its competitors on a newsstand. Once the purchase is made, however, the cover no longer has any real significance.

*Playboy* magazine, for example, sells 6.5 million copies monthly, 76 percent of which are merchandised via newsstand sales. The cover is a point-of-sale advertising piece; an ineffective *Playboy* cover could reduce newsstand sales as much as 5 percent. Many competing magazines are less expensive. Many decorate their covers with stronger, more lurid and libidinal attentions. *Playboy* covers, considering they could display an infinite range of content from overt sex scenes to intimate anatomical details, are strangely modest and subdued. They depend upon a subliminal sell.

The question is, how does the cover sell *Playboy* when no obvious hard-sell sales technique ever appears?

There are two *Playboy* audiences: the magazine *purchasers* for whom the cover is primarily designed, 6.5 million; and the magazine *reader* for whom the content and advertising are designed—3.35 readers per copy, of which 2.7 are men and .65 are women. This constitutes a reading

audience of over 21.8 million individuals monthly. Out of the total 21.8 million, the magazine reaches roughly 4.2 million women monthly, few of whom actually purchase the magazine but read their husbands' or boyfriends' copies.

The average *Playboy* male reader is 25.4 years old, 73.6 percent are between 18 and 34 years old, 60.4 percent are married, 52.5 percent attended college, 50.3 percent have household incomes of \$10,000 or over, 26.8 percent make \$15,000 or over, 31 percent are in professional or managerial occupations, and 51.9 percent have one or more children.

Forty-five percent drink gin; 48.6 percent, vodka; 28.2 percent, rum; 42 percent, bourbon; 35.8 percent, American wine; 22.5 percent, imported wine; 23.1 percent, cordials and liqueurs; and 22.4 percent, brandy and cognac. Readers will, of course, overlap in their alcoholic preferences.

An enormous quantity of information on the purchasing habits for clothes, automobiles, tobacco, entertainment, toiletries, travel, personal finance, and every other conceivable market describes the *Playboy* reader to editors, writers, advertisers, and the other technicians involved in selling and producing the publication and its advertisements. The data are as detailed as modern research techniques and the most advanced systems of electronic data processing can provide. Minute details are examined with precise care, validity checks run, and in-depth interpretations formulated as complex and detailed as those which physicists might apply to analyzing the intricacies of a new model hydrogen bomb.

For several examples of the prodigious data available on the *Playboy* reader: 25.2 percent of these young men consume more than seven drinks per week of distilled spirits, 18.1 percent more than ten drinks per week, and 12.1 percent more than fifteen drinks; 17 percent own three or more cars; 54.4 percent purchased their principal car new; only one percent own a high-priced foreign car, but 5 percent own low-priced foreign cars; 17.9 percent expect to purchase a new car next year; 23.8 percent purchased two or more suits last year; 12.8 percent purchased seven or more pairs of slacks; 17.3 percent purchased seven or more dress shirts; 18.3 percent seven or more sport shirts; 16.3 percent four or more pairs of shoes; and 15.5 percent sixteen or more pairs of regular stockings; 20.8 percent are heavy smokers (one pack or more daily); 21.1 percent own stocks and 24.8 percent expect to buy stocks and bonds during the next year; 8.3 percent own mutual funds and 15.5 percent expect to

buy mutual funds during the next two years; 20.5 percent purchased life insurance last year while 10.5 percent expect to purchase life insurance next year; and on and on and on.

Exhaustive quantities of such data are also available for every major newspaper, magazine, television program, and radio station audience in North America. The media of mass communication know, as precisely as it is possible to know, *who* their audiences are demographically, and *what* these audiences' emotional as well as purchasing needs involve. The game is predicated upon capturing—through content—as affluent a slice of a particular audience with specified need characteristics as possible.

### *Centerfolds Sell Magazines*

As mentioned, the *Playboy* cover is probably the single most important page in any issue of the magazine, at least in terms of maintaining and increasing circulation. Photographers are reported to have received \$8,000 to \$10,000 for their camera click which winds up on a *Playboy* cover. In comparison, a centerfold photographer reportedly may receive only \$5,000 for his photograph. One might well wonder why any photograph could conceivably be worth this small king's ransom.

The objective of this very expensive artwork is the *Playboy* reader—a young, married male from an upper-middle-class background, with some college experience. His emotional needs, however, are quite complex. It is upon these emotional needs that photographers, editors, and writers must base their communications and successfully merchandise the magazine and its advertised products. These technicians know their reader far better than he knows himself. Indeed, if the reader had the insights into his own unconscious needs that are readily available to media technicians, he would likely throw the magazine down in horror.

Ostensibly, the image reflected by *Playboy* is that of a self-assured young man who is a giant among his peers. He is pursued relentlessly by exotic, beautiful, sex-crazed—though subservient—young women. He drives a high-powered sports car, dresses in the latest fashion, and dines in only the best of restaurants. His friends are famous, celebrated, and sought-after people. He lives in a decorator-designed bachelor pad with thousands of dollars in stereo hi-fi equipment and a private bar stocked with only the finest of liqueurs and im-

ported vintages. He is surrounded by abstract art, expensive imported furniture, and an enormous circular bed while he sleeps. This is the *Playboy* image, designed with loving—money-loving—care and projected into the susceptible minds of 21.8 million readers monthly.

But what is the reality behind this romantic image?

At this point the reader might reflect for a few moments over one of the *Playboy* covers. Looking at the February 1970 cover (see Figure 11), an art critic might ask two simple questions, just as he might while viewing a Rembrandt, Hieronymus Bosch, or Van Gogh painting.

### *Time and Space in Art*

Considering that a picture is time stopped at a particular instant, most pictures will imply a *before*—measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, or even months—and an *after*, measured in the same terms. Simply expressed, the question is: *What is going on in the picture?* The time dimension is usually communicated to a viewer at an unconscious level. Few people are consciously aware of the basic time dimension which exists in virtually all art forms. They are not supposed to be. Quite often the artist will rely upon a viewer's inability to consciously perceive this time dimension in order to evoke a deep emotional feeling of identification within the viewer's unconscious.

The second question is: *What does the picture mean?* As the meaning is the servant of motive, the question involves the artist's objective. A painter's primary motive may be to communicate a deep feeling or sensation. There could also be a conscious or unconscious motive to sell the painting for a high price. In the case of a *Playboy* cover, the primary motive is relatively simple—the cover must sell the magazine. In order to do this effectively, it must relate to emotional needs, both at the conscious and unconscious levels, within the mind of the specific prospective purchaser and must stimulate him to purchase the particular issue. Evaluate any relationship in the picture between people and people, people and things, and things and things.

With this in mind, study for a moment the February 1970 cover. Ask yourself the two questions, what is going on and what does it mean? Your answer should explain, in some way, how the reader is moved to purchase the magazine via the cover message.

These two questions were asked, in precisely this way, to over 500 university student test subjects, a large proportion of whom were regular *Playboy* readers. Not one single student was able to answer the questions. They apparently blocked out of their consciousness all of the information communicated by the cover. Even after two weeks of constant probing they were still unable to explain the cover. This was strange, as each had an extended time period in which to study, think out, and discuss with friends what they all perceived from the photograph. Seeing is believing, as the old, trite, and very foolish platitude goes—that is, if you can consciously see anything.

Remember, however, no one considering the purchase of *Playboy* is consciously aware of the cover. Whatever the information content in the cover, it must be perceived instantly by the purchaser—but certainly not at a level of consciousness which would convey an understanding of the cover's meaning.

In order not to oversimplify the problem, keep in mind that among the 6.5 million who receive the magazine each month, a certain proportion are regulars who will buy the magazine irrespective of its cover. Another proportion are irregulars who have already purchased occasional issues. Then there are the *first-time purchasers*. The *Playboy* editors are aware of these exact proportions. The name of the game, however, is to increase sales, considering that each month there is a certain attrition. The new circulation input must exceed the attrition rate from the preceding month. The cover, therefore, is most specifically designed for the new or occasional purchasers who are likely to be younger than the average readers—far younger, at the emotional development level, than anyone would suspect.

A second group, 150 students, was shown the February 1970 *Playboy* and asked each morning for two weeks what was going on in the cover. No one was able to answer, until one of the students, when asked pointedly what the model was holding in her arms, finally replied, "It's a b-b-b-b-baby."

The student, as it turned out, was not a stutterer. It was, in his own words, as though he had to force his conscious mind to verbalize the word-symbol "baby." The moment he said the word baby, however, there was a gasp from the entire group. Once cued, they perceived almost immediately what was going on.

The model on the February cover is in a nursing posture.

Notice the curvature of the left shoulder and arm, the tenderness with which the arms support the magazines, the right hand caressing above the left shoulder, the expression of nursing tranquillity—implying, of course, the sexual pleasure a mother receives from her nursing infant.

The model is, indeed, nursing a baby held traditionally in her left arm. In one study of 560 Madonna and Child paintings produced over the past 300 years, 490 of the Christ Childs were held in the left arm. A physiological explanation for nursing on the left side has been that the heartbeat, which pacifies the baby, can be heard more strongly on the left than on the right.

The second question, What does all of this mean? puts us into the heart of the matter. What is a nursing mother doing on the cover of *Playboy*? Very simply, she is nursing the *Playboy* reader, giving him preference over her other two children, *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue* magazines (see Chapter 8, The Castrating Cosmovogue). Her other children are girls (siblings) with whom the *Playboy* must compete for mother's breast.

The model's eye contact, however, is not directed at the rabbit ears on the magazine cover. She is looking in adoration at the printed word "Playboy."

#### *Clipped by Bunny Ears*

The symbol on the nursing cover, consciously interpreted as the rabbit ear trademark of *Playboy* magazine, is not being nursed. The left nipple of the model is below where the silhouette rabbit's head would be located. In fact, the rabbit is positioned between the word *Playboy* and the breast—in effect, symbolically interfering with the *Playboy*'s access to the mother's breast. So what does this presumed rabbit trademark—one of the most protected trademarks in American business—mean? The *Playboy* has competed successfully against the two female siblings for his mother's breast. But there still appears to be a barrier between our *Playboy* and the object of his desire—namely, that damned *Playboy* logo.

To test the trademark for its meaning, the rabbit ears as they appeared on the February cover were masked off from all other features and photographed separately. They were shown to several hundred test subjects who had not seen them in the context of the cover. When asked to identify the symbol, the several hundred people came up with only five

possible definitions for the symbol: *leaves, victory sign, peace sign, scarf or apache tie, and scissors or shears.*

This rabbit logo is probably one of the most carefully copyright-protected, publicized, and near-worshiped symbols or totems in America. It identifies a vast publishing, merchandising, hotel, and night club empire. But, again, what does the trademark *mean?* Presumably, the meaning would be related to young men who identify with the symbol. Consider the five possibilities. Only *shears or scissors* appears to have possible direct identification with the sexual needs or inhibitions of this young American male readership.

There is an interesting symbolic history connected with archetypal virility symbols. The hare or rabbit, of course, is popularly known as a symbol of virility, masculinity, and promiscuity. The symbolic rabbit has been around since prehistoric times, when it presumably had a similar meaning. The bull would constitute another, though more aggressively masculine virility symbol. Both rabbits and bulls have been found in the religious drawings on cave walls, pottery, painting, and sculpture of early civilizations.

Virility symbols overtly suggest one meaning, but also imply the opposite meaning at the unconscious level—*castration*. This is a basic characteristic of symbols whether in word or pictorial form. For example, by saying someone "won" a game, there is the unspoken implication of the opposite—that someone else "lost."

The bull, as a symbol of masculinity, male animalism, and virility is an interesting case in point. The bullfight is essentially a castration ritual. *La corrida de toros* (the run of the bulls) has nothing to do with a fight between a man and an animal. The fight is only within the man against his fear. The fear of death is not the greatest fear a man must overcome. The fear of castration, especially significant in the Latin world, is omnipresent and terrifying. Bullfighters are invariably gored in the groin. They are not risking their lives in the arena, but their masculinity before the crowds of sexually excited *aficionados*. The bull, with his threatening horns, has a dual symbolic meaning—*virility*, and its opposite, *castration*. The rabbit symbol of virility, with its scissor-like ears, communicates a similar duality of symbolic meaning.

Hundreds of animated rabbit cartoons have been produced by Hollywood which portray the rabbit as a clever, though physically weak, character who puts down or castrates car-

toon animals of greater strength and power, often in an overtly sexual struggle for dominance or territory. One Bugs Bunny cartoon was titled "*The Barber of Seville*." The energetic Bugs played the title role, dashing about cutting off other animated characters' ties, in a symbolic castration ritual. The tie is one of the most obvious of modern phallic symbols about which much more will be said later.

Small wonder that in 1964 *The Society of Typographic Arts* chose the *Playboy* rabbit logo from among 1,600 entries as one of the fourteen most outstanding corporate trademarks in the United States.

If the *Playboy* trademark can be considered in its dual role as both virility and castration symbol, the logo's symbolic significance deepens considerably. Looking again at the February 1970 cover, who might threaten a young child with castration, at the nursing age—his father or mother? Or, expressed in another way, who is always between the male infant and the exclusive love of his mother? Dad, of course.

Fathers have been trapped in a competitive archetypal situation between their sons and their wives for thousands of years in human evolution—perhaps since the earliest development of the family unit. To the infant male, Mother always loves him best, even though Father is always between him and the object of his primary affection. The child must also compete for Mother's love against brothers and sisters, and sisters always seem to have an edge.

In terms of the February cover, the *Playboy*'s primary need is to get past the threatening paternal castration symbol that is keeping him from his mother's breast. The cover is telling the young reader, in effect, his vicarious participation in this issue of *Playboy* will help him become a man more desirable than his father in the eyes of his mother.

The "Fold Here" lines appear to have no significance except as camouflage for the deeper symbolic meaning. The lines consciously suggest a mechanistic meaning to the cover and serve to lead conscious perception away from the subliminally meaningful nursing situation.

After testing this particular cover with over 650 university students, no meaningful or supportable alternate interpretation appeared.

### Mother Loves Playboy Best

This analysis of the symbolic techniques of modern commercial communication media is certainly not merely a critique of *Playboy* magazine. Indeed, examples from *Playboy* are used because they do it so extremely well. *Playboy* pioneered in developing reliable techniques for the manipulation of their audience's unconscious. And besides, *Playboy* is good fun—especially if you can read what is going on subliminally beneath the surface.

There is a rich abundance of theoretical material on the use and misuse of the unconscious mind in human affairs. Some of these theories will be explored in subsequent analyses.

Because the implications within the February 1970 *Playboy* cover were, to say the least, unsettling, a large number of other covers were analyzed similarly, using several hundred college students. From the roughly thirty *Playboy* covers studied, 70 percent had some obvious representation of mother. These seven out of ten contained scenes with a mother figure dealing with a small infant—the small child being the object with whom the prospective *Playboy* purchaser would identify. Most surprisingly, four out of the seven of these maternally oriented covers involved infants in nursing situations. One might well wonder what infants and nursing mothers are doing on the cover of the world's most famous sex magazine. This must say something about our man-about-town—the *Playboy* reader.

Considering that *Playboy* circulation has increased a phenomenal 15.4 percent average each year over the past eleven years, the covers must have been somewhat successful in helping to merchandise the magazine. The patterns evident in these covers at the subliminal level offer some interesting, indeed fascinating, insights into the emotional needs and reality of the millions of young men who each month purchase the publication. This *Playboy* reader of the Western world begins to appear much different than his widely publicized image suggests at first glance.

Now study the June 1967 cover and make your own evaluation in answer to the two basic questions—What is going on and what does it mean?—in terms which would provide

some insight into how these covers help sell the magazine (see Figure 7).

The June 1967 cover offers the reader an opportunity to identify with the ubiquitous rabbit symbol of virility, cleverness, and promiscuity. Our *Playboy* is wearing what appears to be a beach robe, though it could be a bath or lounging robe. He seems to be thoughtfully studying an attractive young woman lying on her side.

As the *Playboy*'s eyes are covered with sunglasses, we cannot see his eyes; therefore, we cannot be certain what is going on in his mind. Usually in art, whenever the eyes are covered by shadows or sunglasses the meaning communicated is that the person's thoughts are hidden. Certainly the woman—the object of his hidden eyes and thoughts—cannot know what he is thinking.

On the other hand, the girl has her glasses lifted. Her eyes are visible and the *Playboy* knows what she is thinking as she looks at him in adoration. Now, what is going on in her mind—as projected into the perception of the reader's unconscious?

Once again, what is she doing and what is her relationship with the *Playboy*? Obviously she is lying on her side upon a soft surface, presumably sand, though other possibilities such as a soft, messed-up bed are possible. But what kind of a pose is this? What would a woman be reasonably preparing to do in this position? The reader is urged to consult the nearest mother.

Virtually any mother will confirm this is a comfortable and pleasant position for nursing, assumed usually at the beginning of a nursing period so the mother can pleasurable watch her child suckling at the breast.

But something is amiss in the scene. An object again lies between the *Playboy* and his mother's breast—the hat. Whose hat, a man's or a woman's? The hat could admittedly be a woman's beach hat. But this hat in the left-hand picture has two balls—hardly symbolic of womanhood; so the hat is symbolic of a man. Who is he—brother, friend, uncle, cousin, or—you guessed it—Father!

Reading from left to right, the almost identical photographs present a sequence. What happens as the eye moves from left to right? The pictures are identical except for one detail. One of the balls is missing in the right-hand picture—a symbolic castration of dear old Dad, who once again got between the *Playboy* and his mother's breast.

It is, of course, extremely important, when attempting to comprehend the functional implications of symbolic material, to carefully consider every potential meaning. Alternate explanations should be constantly reviewed and compared. The reader can attempt to develop his own alternate interpretation should he find those presented here unacceptable. Whatever it means, in the mass media it must mean *something*; and at the prices paid for these covers—and the prodigious stake in circulation involved—the meaning probably has something to do with selling. These interpretations were tested against hundreds of subjects and were overwhelmingly sustained—not immediately in many cases, and not without considerable agony among many of the test subjects.

It might be trite to remark that many men seek mates who will assume maternal dominance over their sexuality. In one recent study a large number of young wives' wedding pictures were compared with photographs of the young husbands' mothers twenty years earlier. The striking physical resemblances were awesome. This tendency, though present in all men (even though some deal with it by finding mates as completely different in appearance as possible from their mothers), is undoubtedly stronger in some men than in others. The *Playboy* reader would appear to have an abundance of this mother-worshiping tendency.

### *All Tied Up*

Look at the March 1967 *Playboy* cover (see Figure 12). If the long tie is a phallic symbol, what does the bow tie symbolize? The bow tie is also a symbolic phallic symbol, but one that has been tied up securely. If a mother and father were to purchase ties for their small son, which would each of them purchase? The mother would likely purchase a bow and the father the long tie.

The necktie has a long-established symbolic role in our society and in our unconscious. The necktie serves no functional purpose whatsoever, but is socially mandatory in many areas of life. So what do neckties *mean*? The traditional formal male attire—the tuxedo—demands that a man wear a bow tie. His sexuality or masculinity is securely inhibited. Perhaps this is symbolically necessary as the female's formal attire traditionally permits her to display her body. On formal occasions she is licensed to wear sexually provoc-

ative gowns. As long as the male wears his bow tie, however, she is at least symbolically safe.

But on the March cover the model is in the process of untying the bow tie, symbolically turning loose the *Playboy's* phallic masculinity. Her expression rather clearly suggests, however, that the untying will not be permanent. The *Playboy* will be untied sexually by mother only while he indulges his fantasies inside this issue of *Playboy*. Once he has used the magazine for his sexual and masturbatory fantasies, mother will once again tie him up neatly and gently. The magazine symbolically becomes again a momentary escape from the ever-present fear of paternal castration.

The cover model, or representation of the reader's mother, wears the symbol of paternal castration in her hair and on her cuff links, an ever-present threat to the *Playboy* child. But she appears to be dealing with this threat to her beloved child with self-assurance and a relaxed dominance. As she caressingly unties the *Playboy's* sexuality, her expression suggests she knows he will never really get away from her.

When the symbolic significance of neckties is thought out, it is difficult to comprehend how any man could seriously select a bow tie for himself. Think of the men you have personally known who consistently wore bow ties. Did these men have distinctive behavioral patterns, such as strong maternal attachments? Consider, moreover, the effect upon audiences when rock singer Tom Jones unties his bow tie during a song usually halfway through his weekly TV show.

### *Subliminal Virginity*

*Playboy* magazine is constructed around the centerfold, which represents the very essence of the publication. The ephemeral virginity of this exalted creature, who is monthly undressed as the hungry reader unfolds the page, is a monument to the fantasy of female perfection. This, indeed, is a woman of whom mother would approve. In fact, she may even look a little like mother did at the age of eighteen.

A large majority of reader test subjects said they would not consider the models in *Playboy* as potential subjects for mating or marriage—for fun and games, but not for serious involvement. With one notable exception, they are only fantasy playthings for the reader, only to be used sexually or as status symbols before other men.

The one exception was the centerfold or Playmate of the

Month. A large proportion of readers tested could consider her a possible mate or wife. A number of young men admitted they could not use the centerfold as a masturbatory stimulus, as some inhibition they described as "guilt" got in the way of their fantasy.

A majority (57 percent) of the readers tested believed the centerfold girl to be a virgin, though all agreed that, if so, it wouldn't be for long. When asked whether she would cease being a virgin in days, weeks, months, or years, 83 percent opted for weeks. Almost unanimously, they agreed she would be a serious, entrapping affair, not a casual fling as would the other girls pictured in the magazine.

When a dozen *Playboy* centerfold stories and pictures are spread out on a table, some fascinating patterns begin to emerge. The girl is invariably presented as a sweet young thing from some small town, or small community in a large city. Her *good* family background is always emphasized. She is often studying social work or some other serious subject involving the welfare of society, at UCLA, NYU, or Ohio State University. She is upper-middle class. Though not a fanatic, she holds religious beliefs in great respect, understands the injustices of society but is not involved deeply in any protest movement, loves her father and respects her mother, is well liked by her employers and friends, dislikes hippies and other way-outs, and appreciates the finer things in life and—most important—has no ambition to compete with men for a place in the sun. Even in a recent centerfold where the model was presented as a hippie, a careful reading of the text revealed that she could only have been an ersatz hippie; she had friends and acquaintances in the movement, while she respectfully lived on the fringes with no personal involvement.

In short, the Playmate of the Month is a square. After looking through dozens of the centerfold stories and pictures, one cannot help but wonder what this sweet young thing is doing naked in the middle of a magazine read by nearly 22 million people monthly.

The centerfold is the nucleus of *Playboy*. Looking at the magazine as a family structure, the centerfold girl is the only girl in the magazine whom the mother symbol on the cover might approve of as a daughter-in-law. The centerfold section is never run adjacent to any other sex-object photographic art. In each issue there are two sex-object sections—one in front of the centerfold and one after the centerfold.

But each of these two sections are kept well segregated from the centerfold story, so as not to contaminate the image of perfection. Once a model has appeared in the centerfold, even though she may later appear in the magazine, she has been dethroned or symbolically deposed of her virginity. In reprinting her photograph, she is condemned to a nonvirginal image in the reader's fantasies.

Though a large number of test subjects evaluated the centerfold model as a virgin, virtually no one considered her a virgin when she appeared in later issues. At least the women pictured in *Playboy* centerfolds eventually mature into women. The readers, however, must go on endlessly to a new idealized centerfold fantasy virgin, identifiable with their mothers, month after month after month.

Several hundred *Playboy* purchasers were observed as they removed the magazine from various newsstands. After contemplating the cover, the first inside page they viewed was the centerfold. *Playboy* opens naturally to the centerfold because of the heavier paper stock.

They leaf through—60 percent starting from the front and 40 percent from the back—pretending to be seriously looking for something in the printed pages. It is as though they were sneaking up from the front or the rear as it were, upon the hapless girl in the centerfold. The moment the centerfold is reached, their eyes focus and their faces take on a look of surprise. "My God, look what I found in the middle of this magazine," they seem to say.

The whole ritual drama is an exquisite pantomime, performed over and over, millions of times each month throughout the world. A see-through mirror was installed in a campus magazine store where observers could evaluate the overt behavior of magazine purchasers as they reviewed the merchandise and carried it finally to the cashier. A pattern of behavior appeared very consistently among over 70 percent of the *Playboy* purchasers. The young man enters the store and begins casually scanning the various magazines. The expressions of moral indignation, callous indifference, or contemptuousness appear too frequently in response to what he sees on the racks to be real. Some kind of a ritual is being enacted as the young men work their way slowly, often very slowly, toward the part of the display where *Playboy* awaits them.

When the purchaser finally reaches *Playboy*, he picks the magazine up with studied indifference, thumbing through un-

til he reaches the centerfold—without reading anything, but feigning serious interest in the editorial content. When he unfolds the centerfold, the muscles of his jaws are tight. He maintains, however, a certain quasi-blasé smile upon his closed lips. Frequently, his eyes furtively move from side to side to see if anyone is watching.

The centerfold appears to be one of his primary reasons for purchasing the magazine. The overt decision to purchase or replace the magazine on the rack seems to occur after a quick, average ten seconds, exploration of the Playmate of the Month. If he decides he identifies with the Playmate, he turns to head directly for the cashier. But he doesn't simply carry the magazine in one hand. He carefully folds it, with the cover inside the fold, and places it casually under one arm. He glances around the room again, then walks boldly up to the cashier, opens it quickly, and quickly closes it the moment the cashier has rung up the price. As he proudly walks out of the store, the folded magazine is again under his arm, invisible to the world about him. With the cover folded over, he could be carrying the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harpers*, or the *National Review*.

Even to a casual observer, the entire ritual appears as an incredible expression of guilt. One might well ask why anyone today should feel guilty about simply buying a magazine in our so-called modern and open society.

### No One-Night Stand

Take a more careful look at these centerfolds.

A majority of young male readers perceived the centerfold girl as virginal or sexually inexperienced—though available to the "right man." The Playmate was not perceived as an object for a "casual" affair as were the other female models in the front and back of *Playboy*. She was described as a girl who might be a possible wife or future mother of the reader's children—an idealized image, perhaps more closely related symbolically to the reader's illusion of his sister than to his usual masturbatory stimuli.

Nowhere is the world is there a woman like the centerfold illusion of idealized perfection, faithfulness, understanding, and sympathy with the reader's hang-ups. But she is a serious, marrying ideal, not a mere one-night stand. She demands of the reader the primary loyalty which has heretofore been reserved only for Mother. Notice that the *Playboy* rabbit lo-

go (father symbol) never appears on a centerfold display. The centerfold is maternally approved—Father has nothing to do with it. Father would probably approve of the sex objects at the front and rear of the magazine. To sons, especially sons who regularly read *Playboy*, all fathers are "dirty old men." The father image designed into the magazine's articles, stories, cartoons, and features is almost unbearably consistent.

The Playmate illusion is a carefully structured product of cosmetics, lighting, camera technique, scene design, and a teen-age physique in the idealized standards of American society. One might almost anticipate the model's jumping out of the centerfold, grabbing the nearest baton, and leading a Fourth of July parade down Main Street. She is untouched by the wear and tear of real life experiences. Nevertheless, this Playmate bears no resemblance whatsoever to a real live woman.

One curious technical feature of each centerfold is a synesthetic illusion of tactile experience. Test subjects identified the touch of the centerfold paper—a high-grade, varnished stock, heavier and with a finer finish than that used in the rest of the magazine—with human skin. A large number of test subjects identified the skin texture as that covering the stomach, a few identified it with skin from the shoulder area. An older respondent associated the centerfold texture with Duke Ellington's "Satin Doll." The synesthesia effect of eliciting a sensory experience—touch, smell, or sound—through visual perception is frequently used in advertising and promotional art. Cologne and perfume ads often communicate an aromatic sensation to readers merely through visual stimuli.

Consider what is invested in these centerfolds. Each centerfold includes at least three full pages of black and white and three full pages of color copy and art. At the going rate for full pages of advertising in black and white, these three pages would sell for \$75,600. The centerfold picture occupies three full color pages, which would sell for a total of \$107,340. The centerfold production budget has been estimated by the magazine as roughly \$25,000—including \$5,000 for the photographer and \$5,000 for the model, who also receives a contract for future exploitation, publicity, and other services to the corporation. In total, the six-page centerfold in *Playboy* would be worth over \$200,000. This is a big investment to dedicate simply to a photograph of a

nude girl, unless that nude girl can be made to relate symbolically to millions of readers and serve as a stimulus for them to continue purchasing the magazine.

Jungian psychologists suggest that the type of symbols utilized in the *Playboy* centerfold—both relative to the model's physical position as well as to the props which surround her—are archetypal, present in the unconscious of humans "since the beginning." Many theorists suggest that some information is inherited in the human psyche. Who knows what explanation for this phenomenon will finally develop. There is already an enormous literature in mythology and psychology which attempts to theorize on how archetypal symbols work. The fact is, no one really knows for sure. The symbols are frequently evident in dreams, even the dreams of young children. And, as many advertising research specialists will testify, the symbolic archetypes are fully capable of motivating sales among consumers.

### *A Playmate's Occupational Hazards*

A new subliminal technique appeared in the February 1972 *Playboy* centerfold (see Figure 23). The curvaceous photo-retouched blonde model is in a kneeling position against a pink background of sheets and blanket. An interlaced mosaic of embedded SEXes covers the hair, body and facial skin, and the bedclothes. The model's erotically expectant facial expression—and her kneeling position supported on her elbows—rather obviously demonstrate her symbolic offering to the demanding eye of the *Playboy* reader. The centerfold offers a masturbatory fantasy in the so-called dog position. This, of course, is only what the reader perceives at the conscious level. There is much more. It's the unconsciously perceived stimuli, not the conscious perceptions, that sell and sell and sell.

If the satin border of the blanket is carefully studied, embedded SEXes of various-sized letters appear. The embeds are staggered along the border from the bottom of the page up to where the border disappears behind the airbrush-retouched model's fanny. This dense concentration of embedded SEXes can be easily seen under a good light, if the viewers can relax and concentrate their attention on the area. Several deep breaths as an aid to relaxation will assist in making the subliminal material available to conscious perception. As the embeds become visible, notice the SEXes

are larger and heavier letters than those used in the embedded mosaic which covers the body and bedclothes. It is as though the centerfold artist were trying to tell the reader something. Hold the centerfold section up to a strong light and study the area along the satin border. This may well be one of the world's first examples of see-through subliminal pornography, communicated to the over 22 million people fortunate enough to have thumbed through the February 1972 issue of *Playboy*.

Perhaps strangely, if one thinks in the simplistic terms of logical reasoning, the *Playboy* readers were not supposed to consciously see the large erect penis protruding into the model's vagina. The centerfold section is an advertisement for the magazine. As with most advertising, if the reader is consciously aware of the technique which is designed to affect his purchasing behavior, he may resist the purchase. Anything consciously perceived can be evaluated, criticized, discussed, argued, and possibly rejected, whereas unconsciously perceived information meets no resistance or qualification by the intellect. Subliminal data are merely stored in the brain with identifications (recall the Poetzle effect) which will trigger a delayed, alarm-clock reaction capable of motivating behavior.

Should the centerfold have been consciously perceived as pornography by the highly conventional, fantasy-controlled *Playboy* readers, in all likelihood they would have immediately cancelled their subscriptions or demanded their dollar returned. The centerfold image is consistently the only "nice girl" fantasy in the publication.

Miss February's subliminal adventure into pornography was most cleverly constructed. The black-and-white photograph on the reverse side of the satin blanket border was painstaking posed and retouched to accommodate the see-through effect. The model's knee, which has been carefully airbrushed so the outline sharply contrasts against the background, forms the head of the erect penis. The grass shading has been reversed. Instead of the gray shade it should have been, a column of white grass (as though it were reflecting sunlight) appears directly under the knee.

Recall how the centerfold works as a sales stimulus for the magazine. The prospective purchaser, attracted by the cover, removes *Playboy* from the display rack. He opens the magazine to the centerfold—the book will not easily open to any other page. Opening the fold-out page to check out

the monthly offering, the Playboy makes his purchase decision.

With the February centerfold, merely opening the fold-over page makes the erect penis on the reverse side visible to the unconscious. It would be interesting to obtain the monthly sales records of Playboy for both before and after the February centerfold, to calculate the practical dollar and cents rewards from subliminal manipulation.

The see-through technique has apparently been used only rarely in *Playboy* centerfolds. In the November 1970 issue, on the reverse, black-and-white side of the fold-out page a picture of Hugh Hefner's DC-9 jet airplane appears. Seen through the colored Playmate portrait, the airplane appears as a phallic shape nestling inside the womb of the prostrate model. The October 1972 issue of *Out*, a *Playboy* subsidiary, also featured see-through pornography in the centerfold. When it is held up to a light, a drawing of Marlon Brando appears to be committing cunnilingus between the legs of the centerfold model.

Though this see-through technique has a staggering potential as an advertising device, it does not appear to have been widely applied as yet. If the basic or primary human sensory input is tactility, and if a tactile sensory response can be initiated by see-through light as in television—or as in the February *Playboy* centerfold—in a synesthesia effect, a most powerful subliminal technique is available for the programming and conditioning of human response. It is extremely curious that anything as obvious—and as well-known over a long period of time—has not been exhaustively studied by social and behavioral scientists, who appear to have carefully avoided any contact with the subject.

### *The Real Thing*

Perhaps the ultimate solution for the *Playboy* or sex-queen-nourished adult-adolescent is a device currently being marketed in men's magazine advertisements: a life-sized plastic female doll complete with wigs, nightgowns, miniskirts, and tight sweaters. The ads specify that the plastic model is anatomically complete, with a skin texture "*more real than the real thing*." The dolls are described as "friends who will make a delightful companion both for parties and in bed." The advantages of a synthetic woman are obvious. She does not have to be fed expensive steaks or dressed lavishly, or

considered as a human being. Should the Playboy become annoyed or impatient with her, he can, if he wishes, throw her into a closet. The world of illusion may indeed have certain advantages over real life. There is no fear of rejection involved in a love affair with a fantasy or a plastic doll.

The entire basic concept of *Playboy* was built upon North American, upper-middle class, young men's unresolved Oedipal conflicts.

## 8. The Castrating Cosmovogue

The subliminal dimension of women's magazines is based upon what men think a desirable woman should feel, look, smell, taste, think, and sound like. Vast quantities of consumer research by the media have been concentrated upon the incredible assortment of clothes, cosmetics, jewelry, medicinals, antiseptics, and other products which are designed to play a role in woman's eternal pursuit of man and her own identity.

In attempting to decipher the subliminal themes communicated by women's publications, we must first ask: *What do women really want? What are their goals?* What basic emotional needs must the magazine fulfill in order to communicate effectively with their tens of millions of female readers? To achieve the sustained loyalty of a large audience, it is absolutely necessary for the media to satisfy these needs in some way.

Female audiences are as diverse as their male counterparts. Adolescent girls have different needs than do young mature women. Those who are married confront different emotional problems of adjustment than do those who are single. There are vast differences between the younger married with small children and the older married with grown or nearly grown children. Most successful women's magazines specialize in a particular *demographic* and *emotional-need* profile. The advertiser's demands for specific audience spectrums—which can produce *low cost per thousand* readers in fashions, cosmetics, jewelry, and the myriad female accessories—have virtually eliminated the general-circulation publications such as *Colliers*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, and others. The CPM for general audiences is much lower on television than in general magazines.

*Cosmopolitan* magazine is a good case in point—a highly specialized women's magazine. The reader's median age is 37.6, individual annual income \$4,359, and household income

\$9,496. The majority of *Cosmo* readers are unmarried, live in large metropolitan areas, and work at secretarial or clerical occupations. *Cosmo* reaches 951,000 homes and each copy is read by 3.69 readers—3.5 million readers total. Roughly 80 percent of the readers are women and 20 percent are men, most of whom obtain their copies through women. Since 80 percent of each edition is sold via newsstands, like *Playboy*, the *Cosmo* cover is a critical merchandising tool for the publication.

### *The Cosmo's Playboy*

The *Cosmo* reader image—as self-projected via Narcissus Narcosis by the ads, articles, stories, and illustrations—is that of a sophisticated woman of the world who is independent, makes her own decisions, is by her own choice unmarried, and dominates handsome men who constantly surround her and plead for her love and affection. In several strange dimensions the *Cosmo* reader's self-image parallels that of *Playboy* readers.

*Cosmo* models photographed for the illustrations or advertisements—with whom the reader identifies—are between 23 and 29 years old, considerably younger than the average reader. These are idealized ages into which the 37.6-year-old reader can project her fantasy self. In other words, the stories, articles, features, illustrations, and advertisements are telling the reader what she wants to hear about herself and projecting her idealized self-image.

Like all media in North America, *Cosmopolitan* integrates editorial and advertising images into a unified, complementary, and mutually reinforcing whole—predicated upon a world of fantasy projection. The idealized content image engineered by *Cosmo* editors projects women who make from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year. *Cosmo* audiences can fantasy themselves into income brackets higher than their actual average income of \$4,359. But there is a limit imposed by reasonable life expectations. If the *Cosmo* content image were not carefully engineered—and models or characters in the stories increased their image income to, say, \$25,000 per year as in *Vogue* magazine—the image would be far beyond the reasonable life-style expectations of the reader. They would reject the high-income image because they cannot identify this far beyond their realities. Similarly, no reader would wish to identify with an image at her

actual income level. She knows what it is like to live at that level, and it is probably similar to that of her friends and acquaintances. No romantic fantasies here, and likewise no reader identification.

Reader identification images in *Cosmo* are either never-marrieds or divorcees. They live in large cities like San Francisco, New York, or Chicago. They are from small towns, often in the Midwest, like Ashtabula, Ohio. They have migrated to the big city to find a career, romance, love, and marriage—in that order. The image eventually finds what she is looking for, unlike the reality of the reader who never quite makes it. The fantasy content-image characters in stories and articles maintain apartments—often with other women—in which a man could feel at home. They are, perhaps like the readers in *real* life, continually painting or decorating their bachelor-girl apartments—virtually a life-long avocation in which the apartment is never finished, even though substantial purchases toward the end are continually made from *Cosmo*-advertised products. Should the apartment ever be finished, they would have symbolically resigned themselves to eternal bachelorhood.

The idealized *Cosmo* image is a woman who dabbles in psychiatrists and analysts of several different persuasions. She attends a wide variety of social and entertainment events, always escorted by a handsome male. The idealized readers are financially comfortable, but careful and judicious about money—even though they are prone to excessive extravagance from time to time to combat depression at the end of a love affair. Taxi rides, for example, are usually considered an infrequent and special event—when they are paying the fare—a small indulgence to compensate for some emotional conflict.

### *Capture, Not Liberation*

Probing more deeply into *Cosmo* content, however, provides a conflicting image of the reader. In order to subliminally identify the reader with the magazine content, there is constant reference—in indirect and unobvious ways—to the reader's loneliness, depression, and despair over not having found marriage, children, and a home. Characters in the content often go for a drive, go shopping, or take a vacation to get away from themselves, eternally looking for clothes, cosmetics, or situations in which they can find their dream

man. A content undercurrent mirrors the readers' real fear that time is running out, with their dreams unrealized. Marriage, for the characters in the content, is presented as a desirable (under *certain conditions*—quite impossible conditions actually) though remote possibility. *Cosmo* actually appears to be preparing their readers for a life of not being married, rather than holding forth a bright promise of marital bliss.

Most marital situations portrayed in *Cosmo* are unpleasant relationships between maladjusted individuals. The married woman's image is a negative reference throughout, unless she happens to be a long-tenured single girl who has just made it to the altar. Married women are shown as spoiled, ungrateful, and unaccomplished women who exploit and manipulate their hard-working and sacrificing husbands. They don't realize how really well off they are. The proposition forcefully appears that if the reader were only in their shoes, she would know exactly what to do with the opportunity.

Though *Cosmo* ostensibly appears to recommend change in the status of women and freedom from moral tradition and restraint, the content repeatedly puts down women's liberation—the last thing these readers are looking for—together with hippies and rebels of all descriptions. These readers want to be captured, not liberated. Often repeated *Cosmo* lines are, "No hippies, no long hair, no pot, no protectors." The idealized *Cosmo* image of desirable young people is often summed up as, "shiny-nosed kids, glossy-haired, middle-of-the-knee-trench-coat-kids, clean-cut, Coke drinkers clutching slim volumes of poetry to Peter Pan blouses."

Superficially the *Cosmo* reader appears in the forefront of revolutionaries demanding a change in American life-styles, accepting adultery and free love, and demanding the abolition of social, moral, and religious restraints. Underneath, at the subliminal level, *Cosmo* acknowledges the reader's need to leave change alone because it is threatening, even frightening. *Cosmo* provides an illusion of change for the reader—a revolution she can participate in simply through the regular purchase of the magazine. Vicarious participation through *Cosmo* allows her to feel she is a part of the new rebellion without ever being compelled to fire a shot.

Strangely, perhaps, a careful reading of the editorial content consistently reveals that the reader really does not have a "fabulous" time at parties. Parties are portrayed as painful

events, full of uncertainty and loneliness. A cruel way of putting it is that *Cosmo* is slanted toward the reader who considers herself a social loser. Constant references allude to the "lonesome city," "post-dawn emptiness," "creeping depression." Stories and articles carefully avoid any overt communication to the reader that their female characters are socially unacceptable or unwanted. If a character or author comments, "She never eats lunch," a qualifier is always added: "Not because she wasn't invited."

The *Cosmo* reader, as reflected in the idealized image of the regular columns, thinks of art exhibits, movies, and plays not as art, but as a date, a preliminary step toward the nirvana which will end loneliness—a man and hopefully marriage.

It is not just *a man* that is projected as a primary goal between the *Cosmo* covers. He is a very special man. Female models, both in the ads and illustrations, are often posed with their hands cupped together, or in some other protective symbolic shielding of their genital areas, communicating the idea of selectivity toward anyone to whom they expose their sexuality. The *Cosmo* reader's fantasy man is submissive and subordinate, often quite effeminate.

### *Oedipus Meets Electra*

In the ads, stories, and illustrations, men are almost always dominated by women. The initiative is never in the man's hands. The woman controls, the man is controlled. The male image suggests a man in need of a mother. The subordinate male image presented by *Cosmo* permits the reader to assume a fantasy mothering role—"pet him," "wait on him," "bring him in out of the rain." The repetitive theme is "You feed them, house them, and listen to their troubles." The Electra complex is as much a part of *Cosmopolitan* as the Oedipus complex is of *Playboy*. Oedipus, of course, was an ancient Greek king who married his own mother, though inadvertently. The gods punished him with blindness.

However, though the male image reflects an immature little boy who needs mothering, it is also presented as a potential bastard who is responsible for all women's problems. The often-repeated idea, "You don't like to throw anything out, even to make room for his belongings," implies female dominance (it's her apartment) and a temporary liaison.

Though the lion and other symbols of strong sexual in-

dulgence are used consistently in *Cosmo*, the male image projected in both copy and illustrations is often that of a homosexual or at least a very effeminate male. Male assertions of masculinity are threatening to the *Cosmo* reader. So, in the world of *Cosmo* illusions, the woman must dominate and control. She often assumes the male role.

The *Cosmo* male image communicated is that of a swinger superficially, even though a somewhat effeminate one. Underneath, however, he turns out to be a highly conventional square. The male-female images are fascinating. Frequent articles reiterate this female projection of an idealized male with strong latent homosexual characteristics. A typical article was titled, "She-Man, Today's Erotic Hero." The "She-Man" wore feminine clothes, behaved submissively, and carried a pouch (purse). The "She-Man" was a "better lover, not ashamed or fearful of that part of himself which borders on or overlaps being feminine." The *Cosmo* male image, "loves woman as a man who envies them."

The female authors and story characters often express the feeling, "The more I love him, the more masculine I become." Probing into these image projections which manipulate the *Cosmo* reader, it is not at all difficult to conclude that *Cosmopolitan* is subtly—and sometimes not so subtly—advocating female homosexuality rather than heterosexuality. *Cosmo* consistently presents a poorly camouflaged image of hostility toward the male, perhaps justified in that, "They hurt women."

On the other hand, there appears the definite possibility that these women enjoy being hurt. *Cosmo* has repeatedly published material on the Sacher-Masoch phenomenon. Masochism and related emotional syndromes are frequently mentioned. The entire "love" concept presented in *Cosmo* is involved with male cruelty. The reader's bruises must be salved.

"Most American men," *Cosmo* elaborates, "are permanently out to lunch. Most American women let them get away with it." Rejection and jealousy are always responsible for overeating, depression, bitchiness, and virtually any other symptom a woman might complain of—there are many. The ideal *Cosmo* male image who is jealous of women, "sounds like Edith Piaf telling a story like Johnny Cash." The masculine male, on the other hand, is projected as a heavy who must "break a million hearts with minimal emotional and financial strain."

### Symbolic Delivery

Though certainly not simple—no woman, or man for that matter, is simple—the basic emotional need in the readers exploited by *Cosmo* is singular. The March 1970 cover illustrates why the magazine has been so successful (see Figure 27). When the prospective *Cosmo* purchaser perceived the cover on a newsstand, in comparison with competing publications, all she consciously perceived was an attractive young woman model in a knit bikini.

The cover model, like most *Cosmo* cover models, has small breasts and a boyish figure, suggesting independence in body as well as in mind. When the cover is opened, the fold-out reveals a man resting his head on the model's knee. A simple two-page cover scene that appears, at least overtly, attractive, though consciously unexciting at least to a woman. There is no ostentatious fashion display, no overt sexual theme, and the man's body is discreetly cut off (castrated) above the waist. How, then, does this cover help sell nearly a million copies of *Cosmopolitan* to average readers who are unmarried and in their late thirties? Remember, to sell or communicate effectively, the cover content must appeal to basic motives or goals in both the conscious and unconscious minds of this specialized female audience.

What do the regular readers of *Cosmo* really want out of life? As the cover is viewed on the newsstand, the model's right arm forms a phallic symbol, with the sunglasses representing the symbolic testicles. The gold bracelet symbolically emphasizes the phallic head. Most jewelry serves archetypal symbolic needs relative to the origin of life, or in the vulgarized modern conception—sex.

The model's phallic right arm leads the eye toward the elliptical face surrounded by hair—a vaginal symbol. Within the general female genital symbol formed by the face are reinforcing genital symbols—the nose and eyes are phallic representations, and the mouth outlined in lipstick presents a symbolic vagina in a state of passion or arousal. The female face on the cover symbolizes a union of male and female genitals as the unconscious integrates symbolically the eyes, nose, and mouth.

The model's sunglasses and arm, together with her face with its reinforcing genital symbolism, also means at the unconscious level a sexual union. Subliminal or symbolic sex is

the *modus operandi* of the *Cosmopolitan* cover, which is a primary point-of-sale advertising stimulus for the publication. But there is even more to the symbolic encounter.

Though she is clothed in a brief, modern bikini—suggesting the liberated American woman—a gold chain is tied about her waist. She is, even though liberated, still chained to her basic womanhood.

What every woman, especially the single *Cosmo* reader, really wants becomes subliminally evident when the prospective purchaser removes the March issue from the rack and opens out the cover. The young, rather effeminate man with his head resting on the model's thigh has his arms crossed. There are two situations where a man's arms are likely to be in this position. Arms are crossed on a cadaver, as they are difficult parts of the anatomy to handle because of *rigor mortis*. But the *Cosmo* male cover model is certainly not dead, even at the symbolic level, though his sexuality has been cropped off the fold-out. The other natural situation where a male would find his arms in this position is at birth. The fetus develops with arms folded over the chest. Symbolically, the arms in a folded situation can represent either the beginning of life—sex—or the end of life—death.

The background shape under the female's extended arm symbolizes the uterine passage. The cover model is in the process of symbolically giving birth to a male child.

The cover, ostensibly only a picture of a female and male model, includes symbolically the entire basic human drama of *coitus*, *conception*, and *birth*. This subliminal message—presumably successful, as the theme is often repeated on *Cosmo* covers—communicates with the magazine's readers through their unconscious; it relates their emotional needs to the publication—in effect, manipulating them via their emotional hang-ups to purchase the magazine and its advertised contents as a means to resolve their frustrations. Remember, these readers are middle-aged unmarried women. This is a promise, of course, which is rarely fulfilled, possibly leading the reader to even greater frustration.

Advertisers do not generally aim their messages at all members of a media audience. They define their specific markets demographically as well as in terms of emotional needs or psychographics. The actual market sought out by an advertisement may be a very small proportion of total audience available. The selective audience strategies are illus-

trated in the *Cosmo* Army Nurse Corps advertisement (see Figure 13).

Prospective Army nurses must be college graduates, 18 to 28 years old, unmarried, and must have majored in nursing or a related subject while in college. The demographics of these potential Army nurses are relatively simple, though finding the qualified candidates among the 3.5 million *Cosmo* readers may be like looking for a needle in a haystack.

The emotional-need characteristics of potential Army nurses restrict the target group's size even more than do the demographics. What type of woman is likely to find an Army nursing career attractive? Study the model in the ad. Photographers' models can be obtained in all shapes, colors, sizes, and dimensions. The nurse model was carefully selected. Her face is boyish, if not masculine. Her hair lacks the usual feminine length or style. She wears no makeup. This, of course, was structured on purpose for the photograph. It would have been quite easy to send this attractive young woman to a beauty salon before the posing session. She is posed with a background of tropical plants, suggesting overseas assignment. The model might have been posed in a glamorous gown at an officers' club party or on a moonlit tropical beach; most women would look at military service as a temporary employment while they husband-searched. This motive, of course, would not serve the interests of the Army Nurse Corps. They seek a woman who can find long-term emotional satisfaction from military service, a woman unlikely to leave the Army, marry, and have children.

So, instead of a glamorous evening gown, the model is posed in masculine work clothes. She is even wearing a man's T-shirt. Her name, Mikesell, is about as strongly masculine a name as could have been found in the Manhattan telephone directory. Her body is flat-chested and masculine. Though it is entirely possible for a woman to appear sexually attractive to a man in her army fatigues—Mary Martin did it rather nicely in *South Pacific*—this photographer has been careful to void any suggestion of femininity in the nurse-model.

To emphasize the dominant masculine image of the career nurse, a pair of scissors—the tradition-honored symbol of male castration—protrudes as the symbolic testes of a hidden phallic symbol from her breast pocket. An additional phallic symbol—designed to, so to speak, nail the lid down on her masculinity—appears in her right hand unnoticed by the conscious mind.

The caption in the upper right reads, "Officer. Nurse. Woman." The power designation of an "Officer" comes first, and is presumably the major motivation of the desirable candidate for an Army nurse career. "Nurse," is the second qualification, though the power prerogatives of the nursing profession may be an occupational attraction to women with strong power drives. The last emotional need qualification of women desirable by the Army is "Woman." The generalized needs of women are apparently subordinated by the Army to power and occupational needs.

As similar ads are used repeatedly as recruiting devices—and because the ads' success can be easily calculated by the number of coupons that are sent in by prospective candidates—the ad was probably most successful in locating the precise type of woman desired by the U.S. Army. A woman lacking these desirable emotional characteristics could not in any way identify herself with the model. Most women *Cosmo* readers would never even notice the ad as they thumbed through the publication.

### *The Dominant and the Dominated*

The ability of advertisers to locate prospective consumers with definable emotional needs and demographic characteristics is a well-developed art and science of communication. Emotional predispositions, often unknown to the consumers themselves, are exploited with precision.

The "Tweed Again" ad is a classic example of a subliminal story told to a certain type of woman almost instantaneously as she perceives the page (see Figure 28). The Tweed ad appeared in *Cosmo*, so recall the demographic description of the *Cosmo* reader.

What is going on in the photograph? One could easily predict that sex of some description is going on, even though no actual person is apparent. The scene is an old, wealthy, traditional home, suggested by the inlaid floor and antique chair. Only an idealized husband-wife relationship could occur in this setting. Even though the consumer at whom the ad is directed would likely be unmarried, this kind of marriage would form her idealized fantasy of marriage.

The man is an "older man" because of the old-style pocket watch, a watch like father used to carry. The woman is younger, or sees herself as younger, because of the youthful slippers. She is over thirty, perhaps over forty, as she would

have to be that old for her father to have carried the heavy, hand-wound, pocket watch.

Earlier, the man had been dressed to ride a horse—attested to by the boots and whip. As the boots are polished and immaculate, he never got out of the house. Whatever sexual urge overcame him, he took his boots off in a hurry, even before she removed her slippers—the slipper laces are on top of the boot. The woman was presumably overwhelmed by his passion as she dropped the red rose he had brought her—a symbol of love and passion. She removed her blouse before her hairpins, or he did it for her. Women invariably remove their hairpins before their clothing when they undress themselves. Indeed, they must have been in a hurry to "*Tweed Again*."

The boots and whip suggest that the submissive female target of the ad has a strong need for male, perhaps paternal, domination. A dominant woman would likely find the ad annoying without ever consciously knowing the reason. The perfume Tweed was presumably responsible for this sexual fantasy interlude. As the name Tweed is strongly masculine, older, dominant—like father was or like a daughter wishes father was—the woman responding to the ad can fantasy herself covered with Tweed as she anoints her body with the expensive and heavy aromatic.

Perhaps obviously, only certain types of submissive women with strong needs to be dominated are the primary market aimed at by the manufacturer and his advertising agency. Tweed perfume would have a limited market among the dominant woman's liberation enthusiasts. Again, these Tweed women desire capture, not liberation. It would probably be most inaccurate to define women into two such simple groups such as dominant and submissive. All such dichotomous definitions are simplistic nonsense anyway. Each woman, like each man, reflects both of these tendencies simultaneously. Human emotional characteristics differ by degrees of more or less rather than either/or. Emotional predispositions can also vary with time and place. A woman might be sexually dominant and socially submissive, or vice versa, or the tendency could change in degree relative to the comparable tendencies of a particular man with whom she might identify. Likewise, either tendency could be stronger or weaker at different periods in her life.

It is very important, especially in a field such as mass communication, never to oversimplify the conditions which

motivate the highly complex and mostly invisible human animal.

### *Hostess with the Mostest*

While *Cosmopolitan* is the magazine for the woman who wishes to be captured, *Vogue* readers are not searching for liberation either. They believe they already have it—liberation and freedom coupled with the power of decision, social dominance, control over their peers, and endless amusement. *Vogue* is designed for the woman who has made it and made it big, or who very soon expects to be *there*.

*Vogue* readers are *alphas*, in Huxlian terms, married to, about to be married to, or planning to be married to other *alphas*. Her self-image is that of a woman who parties, dines, travels, and shops with the "right" people, goes where the "right" people go, and builds her image to complement and attract the "right" people. She is quite a woman.

One well-known divorced bachelor-about-town who, like most divorced bachelors, was always searching for his next wife, commented that whenever he met a new candidate—regardless of her other attractions—he would run like hell for the nearest exit if he found *Vogue* lying about her apartment. *Vogue* readers have great expectations, ambitions, and drives, but they must find a man to do the actual work. God help him.

*Vogue*'s demographics are revealing. With a relatively small circulation of 550,000 copies, the readers are quite well off—not as well off, perhaps, as their idealized image might propose as it looks back at them every month from the cover, the ads, and the illustrations by America's leading photographers of women. But compared with the average North American housewife, *Vogue* readers are certainly not hardship cases.

While only 10 percent of U.S. families make over \$15,000 annually, 63 percent of *Vogue* reader families are in this stratum; 34 percent of the readers make over \$25,000. The average *Vogue* family makes over \$25,000, compared with the \$8,000 average for all U.S. families.

The average age of *Vogue* readers is in the early thirties and 72 percent are married—if not happily at least comfortably. Some, the younger ones with high upward-mobility husbands, work. The majority, however, are married to men with managerial or executive responsibilities who are quite

likely to be older than their wives. Men usually hit their high earning peak in the mid to late forties.

A significant proportion of *Vogue* readers will be in their second marriage, their husbands in their second, third, or fourth marriage. The more money you make in America, the more marriages you are likely to have during your lifetime. In this high socio-economic level, men on their repetitive trips to the altar marry younger and younger women. The higher the man's income, the larger the age differential is likely to be. It is quite possible that many *Vogue* readers were once loyal to *Cosmopolitan* magazine, but they would be only those who made out, succeeded, hit the jackpot.

The place of children in the life of the *Vogue* reader is curious. Two-thirds of *Vogue* families have no children under 18. This can mean two things: most of the readers are well over 40 (which does not seem to be the case), or they live in a marriage in which children do not play an important role as a source of security and fulfillment. As, apparently, most *Vogue* readers do not have children of their own, they are likely to be involved with the children from their husband's former marriage—a delicate problem.

The *Vogue* reader is well educated—78 percent attended college, 41 percent graduated. Of their husbands, 83 percent attended college, 64 percent graduated; in their occupations (which really determine life-style, fashions, clubs, travel, sports, and amusements) 35 percent are professionals and 32 percent are executives, proprietors, managers, or officials.

Children play a minor role in *Vogue* compared, for example, with the *Ladies' Home Journal* which emphasizes an upper-middle-class family image complete with children, grandchildren, and middle-aged female insecurities.

Ninety-seven percent of *Vogue* readers belong to one or more clubs. They entertain frequently with dinner parties, buffets, and luncheons, and they are entertained equally as often with a total average of 6.4 engagements monthly.

These women are involved in a social life related to, and in support of, their husband's business or profession. In virtually all known societies, familial social life is closely tied to economic means of subsistence. Parties and quiet dinners are given and attended by people who are to be impressed, entertained, and solicited—usually for economic reasons. In such a socio-economic situation, clothes, menus, vacations, and friends who are celebrated or distinguished—all the

status-oriented trappings of the affluent—are vital to social acceptance and success.

### *Narcissus's Horoscope*

*Vogue* content reflects probably the highest female aspirational idealization or self-image fantasy in the American mass media. The reader's power and dominance needs, as well as her insecurities, are reflected on every page. The *Vogue* horoscope (an indispensable feature for American female readers) is heavy with business advice and leadership encouragement: "The courage and dash you felt earlier will be curbed." "Your leadership will be less effectual." "Ideas you develop will come to the attention of those who can promote them." "You might enter a new profession." "Go over to the side of the winners." "Take the initiative now."

Contrast the businesslike *Vogue* horoscope with the bubbling gossip-laced, emotion-oriented advice lushly spilling out of Libra, Capricorn, or Aquarius each month in *Cosmopolitan*: "You're hung up on his money problems." "New moon is maybe marriage time—he loves me, loves me not." "The sun shines on a new self-confidence." "The 2nd and 3rd are meaningful love days." "Friends are vying for your company." "A shamelessly seductive perfume bought on the 3rd might turn that not-for-you man off, the real man on." "On the 10th and 11th, you luxuriate in your femininity and on the 19th he finally responds to your love (even talks marriage)."

Horoscopes are, of course, the most absurd kind of nonsense—fun perhaps, but nevertheless nonsense. They are usually written with considerable skill, and they disclose a great deal about the respective reader's fantasy aspirations and idealized goals in life. Horoscopes, like most regular departments and features in magazines, are mainly used to sustain regular readership. Once a woman finds support for her fantasy image in a popular publication, she will likely end by carrying a copy of the publication with her into the grave.

### *Two in One*

The *Vogue* reader is, of course, a complex sensitive human being who somehow must adjust within her life-style, which—in spite of her indulgences—must be extremely difficult,

insecure, and threatening at times. A group of sixty advanced media students were asked to select a page from one issue of *Vogue* which symbolized the major psychological dilemma, tension, emotional need, paradox, or problem in the life of the *Vogue* reader. Out of the 144 pages available in the November 1971 issue, over forty of the students selected a color fashion photograph by famed photographer Irving Penn (see Figure 20). Strangely enough, though, none of the students was certain just why he had selected the Penn photograph. They all nevertheless *felt* the composition somehow typified the *Vogue* reader. Not one of the test subjects could consciously describe any unique, specific content characteristic about the page, but they agreed the picture said something important about the reader. The following analysis resulted, providing at least some insight into what goes on in *Vogue*.

Within a very old volume on magic and witchcraft a drawing was found of the Hindu deity Ardanari Iswara, one of the many representations of the hermaphrodite goddess, with symbolic coiling snakes and lotus petals. It is reasonable to assume that photographer Irving Penn knew of this representation of the archetypal hermaphrodite before he took the picture for *Vogue*. Compare the drawing with Penn's fashion photograph.

In the *Vogue* illustration one model appears much more masculine than the other. The two models' feet are positioned across and above their knees. If either model crossed her bent knee with her opposite foot, she would be in the Yoga lotus position. The two models are symbolically united in the ancient lotus position. In the Hindu myth of hermaphrodite, a being—half male and half female—was born out of a lotus blossom.

The masculine model in the light sweater is presented without a breast line or curvature. Her belt appears to be a riding stirrup. Compare the belt with the hermaphrodite symbol which covers the genitals of the figure in the Hindu drawing. The hermaphrodite symbol often appears in jewelry. The device was used on the cover of Jacqueline Susann's novel *The Love Machine* and given a contemporary name, *ankh*, which disguised the real symbolic significance of the design. This symbol of the hermaphrodite has been known for at least 2,000 years in European as well as Asian cultures.

The silver bracelet on the light-sweatered model's right arm is symbolic of the coiled snake on the right arm of the

hermaphrodite in the drawing. The model's open right hand, with fingers separated, points phallically toward her genital area; the circular earring, which also appears on the hermaphrodite's right ear, completes, at least symbolically, the male half of the fashion photograph's hermaphrodite theme.

The dark-sweatered model appears more feminine than her companion. A breast line appears in her sweater. The watchband on her left wrist is simply a ringed bracelet, quite similar to that shown on the left wrist (the female side) of the Hindu hermaphrodite. Instead of holding the five-petaled lotus flower in her hand, however, the feminine half of the *Vogue* hermaphrodite wears it as a leather necklace around her throat.

What, then, does hermaphroditic symbolism by one of the world's leading fashion photographers have to do with the well-heeled, well-educated, well-married *Vogue* reader? One conclusion might be that *Vogue* is attempting to communicate with lesbians or to promote the daughters of Sappho among their readership. This is most unlikely. Overt lesbians are estimated at 2 to 3 percent of American women. *Vogue* is not foolish enough to use the expensive talents of Irving Penn for so small a segment of readers. Lesbians, in addition, are likely to find *Vogue* offensive because of its emphasis upon feminine values and female dependence.

Another possible conclusion is that all humans contain biological as well as emotional and personality characteristics of their opposite sex. The hermaphrodite myth is common to all cultures, though biologically a hermaphrodite has never really existed, nor could one exist. Human biological sex differentiation, as it has evolved, must go either male or female. Anthropologists have pursued the hermaphrodite in primitive as well as modern societies in every corner of the world without success. A true biological hermaphrodite human, with the sexually functioning genitals of both sexes, has never been discovered except in mythology.

Men, of course, all carry female hormones, as women all carry male hormones. The *Vogue* symbolic hermaphrodite is related to this duality of emotional need which exists to some degree within every woman.

Many ancient deities were represented as androgynous or hermaphroditic—Egyptian, Hindu, Mexican, Greek, Chinese, Persian, Palestinian, Australian, and others. Hermaphroditic mythology is usually connected with birth or procreation—the uniting of man and woman into a single being, the pri-

mal life force. Plato explained man's creation from an hermaphroditic union of the sexes, permitting mortals to identify with a concept which, in Greek mythology, had been exclusively reserved for the more primitive deities. Marriage ceremonies are usually hermaphroditic in their symbolism—the uniting of male and female. The hermaphrodite has also symbolized intellectual activity not directly connected with sexuality. Many anthropologists believe all cultures looked upon their first god as androgynous.

The *Vogue* illustration was tested by a group of female *Vogue* readers, who unanimously reported the photo involved them emotionally, was interesting and exciting—and a few actually said they might purchase the exercise costumes. None mentioned Yoga or provided any conscious rationalization for their attraction to and identification with the illustration. The symbolistic design was, of course, not designed by photographer Penn to be read at the conscious level.

The ad appears to be actually a paste-up. The two models are so similar in facial lines, hands, feet, and hair that they seem to be the same woman, costumed to appear different at the conscious level, but communicating at the unconscious level the idea that masculine and feminine characteristics are combined and integrated within every woman.

#### *For the Man Who Has Everything*

The *Vogue* cover, an advertisement or point-of-sale merchandising piece, is usually quite revealing in terms of the prospective reader's fantasy life—how she would like to see herself being seen by other people (see Figure 29). A subliminal consistency appears on these covers that suggests the editors and photographers know precisely what they are doing.

The November 1971 *Vogue* cover presents a self-assured, poised, dominant image to the reader. There is a curious thing about the eyes: from whichever angle the cover is viewed, the eyes seem to be looking directly at the reader. Who is this attractive woman in her—a dangerous guess—early thirties? And how is the reader supposed to develop an instantaneous, unconscious identification with the model which will initiate a purchase of the magazine?

The cover model is unmarried. In place of the wedding band, however, she wears a massive diamond and emerald

ring. This ring is not likely to be found on the jewelry counter at Woolworth. The value would be from \$5,000 to \$10,000 at Van Cleef and Arpels. As this model does not communicate the idea of a professionally employed woman, she is likely unemployed, at least in the usual kinds of occupations. The ring, therefore, was a gift—reasonably a man's gift—and, necessarily, a very well-off man's gift.

The dress is ivory crepe and also expensive, with a Canadian fox necklace over her left shoulder—a casual, even modest way to handle a small fortune in fur. The gown and fur are Saks Fifth Avenue. One might wonder how this unemployed woman could afford a gown which cost hundreds, if not over a thousand dollars.

The model appears self-assured. She knows *who she is* and *where she is going*—and it's not to a movie or a Howard Johnson's restaurant. She has likely decided or actually proposed that she and her escort will spend the evening at an expensive restaurant or supper club. She is so self-confident *she doesn't even have to smile*. Her thin, pale, almost sexless lips and light facial makeup have not been painted into the lascivious invitation to sex as they would be in *Cosmopolitan* or *Playboy*. She comes across with a strong "*I don't give a damn! We are operating on my terms!*" attitude toward her male companion or toward what the reader would unconsciously identify as her male companion. The model's phallic forefinger symbolizes masculinity—control and dominance.

Embedded across the model's hair, forehead, cheeks, throat, arms, and hands are numerous SEXes. She is certainly involved with SEX, even if only at the subliminal level, but the sex is just a means of achieving an end. The dimpled curve to the left of her lips, the only thing that gives her any emotional expression, is the top curve of a large capital S; the E and X appear in smaller letters under her lower lip.

In short, this cover model is portraying a very well-kept mistress to someone who can afford the most expensive best. Her impenetrable self-assurance suggests she has already received preferred stock in DuPont and General Motors as gifts. Presumably this image sells magazines, as it appears frequently on *Vogue* covers in a variety of forms. The *well-kept mistress* would have to be a major fantasy projection of married, respectable, *Vogue* readers. *Vogue* sells fantasies, which sell magazines, advertising space and ultimately advertised products.

## 9. Video's Victimized Voyeur

*(It's What He Can't See That Turns Him On)*

Television to the creative director, cameraman, or writer is a low-definition medium. Compare the final detail, degrees of shadow and light, and the intricacies of color gradation available to an artist preparing display materials for the hard-surfaced, varnished paper in slick national magazines with the rough, gross outline forms, color unreliability, and the rough-textured appearance communicated through the video tube. But in spite of the low-definition limitation, television must motivate sales or manipulate human behavior in a way competitive to the other media or it would soon disappear from national prominence.

Television, like all the mass audience media in North America, survives only because it sells. Vast audiences of 50 to 70 million individuals are not uncommon—all perceiving precisely the same audio-visual stimuli at the same instant. Enough of these people respond to TV commercials faithfully and dependably during the days or weeks following their exposure, to justify network advertising time charges ranging from \$25,000 to \$150,000 per minute. Television has developed into the master salesman of all time.

This is difficult to believe—especially after absorbing an evening of what appears to be total absurdity as men and women discuss their constipation, bad breath, body odors, smelly feet, insomnia, backaches, indigestion, and an incredible assortment of psychosomatic ailments before millions of viewers. The women on television commercials appear as neurotic morons whose main life interest involves their never-quite-white laundry, their never-quite-comfortable girdles and brassieres, their relentless search for a kitchen free of stains, germs, odors, and unsightly linoleum scratches, and—the greatest banality of them all—the struggle to obtain *really* soft toilet tissue. America's cultured preoccupation with soft stools is testified to by laxative, as well as toilet paper, advertising.

The men portrayed in all the commercials are, for the most part, pictured as overweight, inept losers. They look to their wives and children for guidance, to various father and mother figures who help them resolve life and death decisions over the purchase of shirts, ties, denture adhesives, headache remedies, automotive accessories, dog food, and hemorrhoid relief products.

It might be very revealing to take a one-hour film of TV commercials spliced together into an aboriginal society and ask what we patronizingly call primitive men to describe the kind of people who live in the tribe portrayed in the commercials. It might be very difficult to sell a Stone-Age culture a concept of civilization based upon television advertising. Should the communists take to the proselytizing warpath again, such a one-hour film would have tremendous impact among the hungry, the impoverished, the dispossessed, and the exploited peoples of the world.

It might be fun to also indulge in a brief critique of the television programs which carry the hard sell. These programs are designed primarily as platforms for advertisements. Like editorial material in newspapers and magazines, the TV programs merely set up the right size and quality of an audience that will appeal to particular advertisers as a market. The program "All in the Family," for example, does not exist to enlighten audiences with insights into a low-intelligence bigot's daily life. *The program exists only to sell the advertisers' products.* Oddly enough, surveys have revealed that a substantial portion of the regular audience identify with—not against—Archie Bunker. Despite the image advertising, the program is not aimed only at the liberal, intellectual elite. As any time salesman from ABC will affirm, Archie *sells*—and that's what it is all about. "All in the Family" is strongly supportive of its sponsor's products.

A number of extremely successful programs have been cancelled—even though they had enormous audiences—because the program was so good no one in the audience could remember the sponsor's name. The prizewinning television show "Medic," starring Richard Boone, went the route of a show just too damned good; it so overpowered the commercials that products just didn't move off the shelves.

### Zenith of Media Creativity

This chapter will concentrate upon the commercials, the epitome of television arts and crafts. More money, time, skill, and talent are expended upon TV commercials than upon any regular program content. The commercials are technically masterpieces of persuasive manipulation. Placed in the appropriate program setting, they sell billions of dollars in merchandise each year in North America. During 1971, 63 million dollars was paid just to the actors and actresses who modeled or performed in these commercials.

The audiences for whom the commercials have been most exactingly produced almost universally consciously reject the apparent sales pitches. They pass it off with an, "Oh, what the hell!" accepting the imposition upon their time and intelligence as a small price to pay for the ego indulgence obtained from dramatic programs. Survey after survey reveals that audiences seem to be universally contemptuous of TV commercials. As costs for a one-minute commercial average around \$50,000 and can go as high as \$200,000 (well worth the price if it sells products at a high enough rate), this appears to be a paradox. Television commercials are the most carefully produced material in the entire field of mass communication. In a 60-second commercial, every single second—even fractions of a second—of both audio and visual content has been precision engineered to accomplish a specific end—sell the product. And television commercials work; they sell unbelievable quantities of products, and the theory suggests that they are most effective with people who believe themselves to be the most indifferent to their appeals.

The old American proverb says *if you want to con someone, you must first get him to trust you, or at least feel superior to you* (these two ideas are related), and get him to let down his guard. The proverb explains a great deal about television commercials. If we assume that people are not stupid, they must react to TV commercials with a feeling of superiority that permits them to believe they are in control. As long as this illusion of volition persists, they would consciously have nothing to fear from the commercials. People are prone to trust anything over which they believe they have control. We are told repeatedly by the media that we do not have to hear or see commercials; we can close our minds—even leave the room or turn off the set. Since we do not

have to, of course all of us do listen to and watch an incredible number of televised commercial messages during the course of a year. We may consciously shut out a few, but hundreds, perhaps even thousands of others, will get through.

TV commercials appear foolish, clumsy, and ineffectual *on purpose*. They are made to appear this way at the conscious level in order to be consciously ridiculed and rejected. The target aimed at in the human mind is the subliminal or unconscious. The real message, the one that sells, is planted securely in the viewer's unconscious.

Every year for nearly a quarter century the New York Advertising Association has awarded prizes to outstanding ad campaigns. These are usually won by arty, interesting, and maturely expressed sales messages aimed at the viewer's conscious mind. None of the award winners has ever been among those ads generally acknowledged to have been the best sellers. Usually the most effective advertising—in terms of sales, not public relations for the advertising industry—are the drug commercials with their animated mechanical men and women, the detergent commercials with their galloping or flying knights and tornados, and the cosmetic commercials with their heaving bosoms and wet-licked lips. Most ad men will confirm that over the years the seemingly worst commercials have sold the best. An effective TV commercial is purposefully designed to insult the viewer's conscious intelligence, thereby penetrating his defenses.

After watching a 30- or 60-second commercial, the illusion that comes through is usually that the content has been casually assembled in a quick and often unpolished way. Nothing could be less true. If the same meticulous attention were given a 90-minute Hollywood feature film that is given a one-minute commercial, the film would take years to complete and the national budget to finance. A single 30-second commercial can easily require a week or more to film, not counting the extensive time often required for lab work on special effects. A single 10-second segment of a TV commercial may be shot and reshot twenty times to get it just right. Each movement, position, action and reaction are carefully studied and calculated for audience affects at both conscious and unconscious levels.

### *Backgrounds into Subliminal Foregrounds*

Backgrounds and frame peripheries are very important as locations for either symbolic or verbal subliminal embeds. In the now famous Alka-Seltzer commercial, "Try it, you'll like it!" no one ever notices the bald waiter standing behind the dissatisfied customer who is complaining, "So I tried it. I almost died!" Viewers only begin to consciously perceive the bald waiter after the third or fourth viewing of the commercial.

The consciously unseen waiter is a very important part of the commercial. He stands stooped and defenseless as the customer complains to the TV audience. Then, throwing his napkin over his shoulder, he turns and disappears into the kitchen. Even after four viewings of the commercial, only about one-third of the audience is consciously aware of the waiter, but all have seen him subliminally the first time they were exposed. If the waiter is taken out of the commercial, the customer's complaints are not funny. The unqualified complaints would tend to annoy the audience, many of whom have undoubtedly been in the same unpleasant position in restaurants. The bald waiter makes the customer's anger a personal issue between an individual waiter and a customer, not hostility which extends to restaurants or waiters in general.

Similar subliminal background techniques have been used for years by motion picture directors, though generally not as precision-defined and applied as in TV commercials. John Huston, in *The African Queen*, used cleverly constructed backgrounds to subliminally convey feelings, moods, and information to the audience. In one scene, after a difficult struggle with the river, Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn encounter a swarm of mosquitoes which nearly smother them. When finally free of the mosquitoes, the two are exhausted. The *African Queen* drifts beside the river bank. Dialogue between the two brilliant actors is mundane, almost devoid of meaning; their expressions are grim, their sentences one-word and abrupt. If you only hear the dialogue, the idea comes through that they are exhausted, but you do not get the overwhelming sense of defeat, failure, and futility that director Huston and his two stars somehow communicate in the audio-visual context of the scene. Part of the secret to the emotional impact of this scene is attributable to a bush of

bougainvillea—dying, half dead, its leaves partly yellow, the red flowers wilted and drooping. The audience never consciously sees the bush; their conscious attention is focused upon the two actors' faces. The dying bougainvillea, of course, is symbolic of death, and there is no doubt that the subliminally perceived bush reinforces the dialogue and action, setting for the audience a great depth of mood throughout the important scene.

In another *African Queen* scene, Bogart and Hepburn have just dramatically survived a dangerous rapid. For the first time in the story, the two characters forget their past—Bogart, the drunken Canadian river bum, a loser through and through; Hepburn, the frigid, up-tight, Methodist missionary lady, hiding her sexual inhibitions among an assortment of biblical platitudes. The two characters embrace in their relief at having survived the rapids. Suddenly, however, they both remember who they really are. They push each other away, both bewildered and frustrated. Bogart throws himself onto the bottom of the boat next to the boiler. His frustrated rage is inconsolable. He grasps the handle of the boiler door, opens it to reveal a fire glowing with intensity and heat (symbolic womb), picks up a large phallic appearing piece of wood, throws it aggressively into the boiler's flames, then slams shut the boiler door—a symbolic expression of impotence. This bit of business, with genital symbolism, presents a superb climax to the scene. No one except a small group of technicians ever paid any conscious attention to the symbolic meaning of this typical Huston device—though millions of people who have seen and enjoyed the movie responded predictably with their emotions. These techniques have been in use for years by such directors as Arthur Penn, Fellini, Huston, Hitchcock, and others, many of whom can command a half-a-million-dollar fee for a single film.

In a feature-length film, a director might use only a handful of symbolic devices during the 90 to 120 minutes. The TV commercial is, by comparison, tightly compressed. With only 30 or 60 seconds to use, even every half second must be loaded with emotional power that will sell the product. A one-minute commercial on the Bob Hope show sells for around \$140,000. At the 20-to-1 ratio, considering advertising as 5 percent of gross sales income, the one minute must sell almost \$2.8 million (560 Chrysler automobiles at \$5,000 each) to merely break even—and remember, breaking even is not what it is all about. Most TV commercial directors,

judging from their work, appear to be astute and disciplined students of cinematographic art forms, and then some.

### *Best Taste in Beer*

As an example, in a 60-second TV commercial for Labatt's beer—a best-selling Canadian beer—an eight-second sequence was reshot at least a dozen times (see Figure 26). The commercial content involved a variety of scenes with young actors appearing to be at various kinds of outdoor activities. One eight-second scene within a 60-second commercial, portrays an attractive young model seated in the grass at a picnic. Her companion, standing next to her, has been drinking from a bottle of Labatt's. The relationship between her head and his genital area was strongly established in only two or three seconds. The young man, after finishing the beer, bends over and places the bottle in the grass in front of the girl—a simple and apparently innocuous movement.

After the sequence was recorded on video tape, however, and played back a frame at a time, some curious things were seen to happen during the brief eight seconds.

In the first still, the model's face is expectant, her mouth sensuous, half open, her tongue is visible. She is looking slightly upward to the level of the standing male's genital area. It is difficult to consciously identify this loving look with a mere bottle of beer: there has to be something more.

In the second still, motion was stopped at the instant the beer bottle passed before the model's face in its downward movement. The picture, with the model's mouth open to receive the phallic bottle, is self-explanatory. After several experimental rehearsals of this scene by the author and his students, it was discovered there is absolutely no way the open mouth and the passing bottle could coordinate in these positions by random chance. The timing had to be split second; the knowledge of what was really going on had to be precise and highly detailed. A *fellatio* scene was embedded subliminally into the Labatt's commercial, to put it simply and directly.

When the illusion is run at full broadcast speed, the entire action takes only eight seconds. The mouth and bottle business are unnoticed by the viewer at the conscious level. The commercial was run half a dozen times for fifty test subjects—after they had seen the still shots from the video tape—and even then no one could consciously perceive what was

going on. Remember, the tachistoscope can put information in the unconscious at 1/3000th of a second. Illusions, such as the Labatt picnic, operate much more slowly, though still invisible to conscious perception. One of the actors in the commercial was shown the stills. He responded with astonishment, "So that's why the damned scene took all day to shoot."

Much like the other print examples of subliminal technique, these techniques are effective mainly because so few people have any conscious idea of how their perception actually works. We cannot seem to fully grasp the great speed at which information can be processed in our own nervous systems, the delicate sensitivity and capacity of our sensory equipment (the thirty-seven or more sensory inputs), and the bewildering reality that all these senses operate simultaneously and continuously. Obviously, the media technicians, in their intense preoccupation with the mechanics of sensory manipulation, are utilizing this general ignorance in their own and their clients' interests.

With television's audio and video, the number of possible ways to trick the eye and ear are enormous. So many possibilities exist, in fact, that equipment is not available which can thoroughly analyze even a single TV commercial, let alone continuously monitor television in the public interest. Subliminals are relatively easy to plant in either sound or visual media. It is often impossible to consciously locate them. Subaudible effects can be planted at low-volume intensities, at various speed harmonics, or at either high or low frequencies—all of which are unheard by conscious perception.

Madison Avenue account executives actually brag about planting subs which, they claim, no one will be able to find. One executive at a major international agency told of burying the words, "Buy——! Buy——!" continuously behind ten seconds of applause at the end of a 60-second TV commercial. Tests showed the instructions worked superbly on a sample of the market he was attempting to influence. He maintained that there was absolutely no way for anyone to prove the subs were actually there.

An executive from another major agency in New York told about their experience with a new analgesic (headache potion) account. Their research department had come up with some interesting data on the relationship between heartbeats and suggestibility. The human heart beats at 72 pulses

per minute. Music or voice timed to this rhythm has an increased ability to affect human behavior. Several experimental commercials were prepared using 72 beats per minute as pacing for drumbeats, music, and voice. The test effects were amazing, according to the executive. The commercials were tested in a special theater with a random audience of housewives and husbands.

Had the analgesic commercial been broadcast to the roughly 30 million people watching the NBC evening news, 5 million would have developed headaches within three hours of viewing it. Frightening? But why not? Many scientists have long believed that the major effect of aspirin and its related compounds is in the power of suggestion that the drug will work rather than in the actual drug ingredients. If you can remove a headache by suggestion—as you can quite easily under hypnosis—you can certainly bring one about by suggestion.

### *The Clean Ones*

In her hopeless attempt to find fulfillment and sexual satisfaction through cleansing products, the American housewife is confronted with an incredible array of get-clean devices—all of which imply that her home must be the filthiest place on earth. If she hadn't been carefully taught to believe that dirt was all about her, threatening her, suffocating her, she would not need all of these products offered to her countless times each day.

Soap commercials are pumped through North American video tubes by the dozens each day of the year, year after year. What they may be doing to the psyches of the millions of women—and their helpless children trapped into attendance during the afternoons, when they are usually broadcast—is largely unknown.

The commercial's plot is invariably simplistic and, one might easily assume at the conscious level, designed to excite and entertain the feble-minded. As was pointed out, this is carefully calculated banality in its most pervasive art form. But the facts are overwhelming to anyone familiar with the copy-testing research of Colgate-Palmolive, Lever Brothers, or Proctor and Gamble. These commercials sell in one of the world's most competitive markets—and they sell and they sell and they sell.

To increase soap sales, the giant international marketing

organizations diversified their products first. Soaps, detergents, or whatever, were packaged and sold for highly specialized purposes. The basic product was the same, the diversification psychological rather than real. No matter how you package it, process it, color it, or make it smell—it's still just soap. The second step was consumer diversification. Soaps were no longer just sold to anyone who needed to wash. Specialized soaps were developed and sold to younger women, older women, housewives, working wives, college graduates, high school dropouts, and so on. The American soap consumer has been divided and subdivided through the most sophisticated demographic and psychographic technology. Some brands are even designed for families where men do the shopping, others where the wives and husbands shop together, and finally some for the housewife who shops alone. The soap companies have meticulously studied the kinds of dirt likely to be dealt with in an enormous range of occupations and life-styles, as well as chemical composition of water in hundreds of various areas of North America to which soap ingredients and marketing practices are adapted. A significant life experience is being merchandised under the guise of soap or detergent. The never-ending promise is psychological- or emotional-need fulfillment, but at an enormous price to the consumer, in emotional as well as in financial terms.

North Americans' phobic behavior about cleanliness has been noted by millions of people outside the country as American tourists have charged about the world with their phallic spray cans full of disinfectants and deodorants, their antiseptic washes and rinses, and their horror over possible contamination or infections from clothing, food, or other items they may be compelled to touch during the course of their daily existence. Much humor, especially in Europe, has been aimed at their carrying abroad rolls of 100 percent American toilet paper. Of course, as many Europeans will readily acknowledge, infection and food poisoning are real possibilities which they live with each day. But Americans appear to have extended their phobia about germs and cleanliness to absurd extremes—extremes which may very possibly increase the likelihood of infections rather than provide a protection. The sale of colognes and other aromatic preparations with which to disguise body and breath odors is also curious. If Americans are so clean, one might reasonably ask, then why are they so concerned over how they smell?

Is it any wonder that in reaction to the soap and pharmaceutical company sponsored phobia of cleanliness, many young rebels have reacted by appearing as slovenly, smelly, and as dirty as they can possibly costume themselves? They might well be trying, perhaps futilely, to tell their parents something—possibly even trying to break the stranglehold on their lives obtained by the unconscious massaging that goes on in soap commercials and advertising.

### *Cleaned-Up Sex*

Consider, for example, the long-range effects of subliminally connecting *sex* and *cleanliness*. When the exaggerated kind of American detergent-processed artificial cleanliness is subconsciously programmed to sexual stimuli, the results may well be a rejection of odors, for example, which have somehow aided humans in emotional survival and adjustment, as well as reproduction, over thousands of years of evolution. It may well turn out to have been quite destructive to replace these odors with perfumed, aromatic substitutes. Perhaps we are reaching the point where any natural human odor, secretion, or bodily fluid will have to be sprayed or processed and disguised completely by some advertised product in order for us to feel ourselves either socially or sexually acceptable. It might be fascinating to research into how long a North American could presently endure life without a soap, aromatic, or deodorant product of some sort.

In virtually all TV commercials, the director-photographer-writer's preoccupation with genital and erogenous areas of the human body is apparent. Regardless of the product or brand—patent medicine, cosmetics, soaps, toothpaste, toilet paper—male and female models appear to have been cast primarily because of erotic lip, mouth, and tongue appearances during speech. After reviewing hundreds of commercials at slow speeds, the most impressive thing about them is their erotic-oral implications—kissing, fingers and other objects protruding into the mouth, pointed visible tongues, sensuous and precision-curved lips symbolizing the female vagina, lip thickness or heaviness, and sensuousness in eyes, facial shadows, lip expressions, and exposure of the erogenous zone on the neck beneath the ear. With TV's low-definition problem, the camera must work in close; most of the sensuous detail is lost in a long shot. The mouth, almost universally, seems to be the primary focal point.

Other often-used erotically stimulating portions of the anatomy include hair (used with all its rich archetypal erotic significance), and eyes (heavily made up to emphasize their elliptical shape and surrounded by eyelash hair and dark lids) painted in various genital colors—red, purple, or blue. TV commercial images are very often constructed around simple basic forms—triangles, circles, oblong shapes—all oriented toward some erotic suggestion. Models appear sexually excited, even orgasmic, over a triangular piece of dirty laundry that has been successfully cleaned and whitened (the triangle balancing upon the point of one angle is archetypally symbolic of man), a phallic-shaped cylindrical hair-spray can (watch carefully how the models hold and use these spray cans and the directions in which the cans always seem to point), or the round opening in the bottom of a sink drain as the foamy dishwater is sucked deeply down inside the solid round drainpipe.

The SEXes, of course, are discreetly embedded in clothing, hair, flowers, trees, in anything with lines into which can be drawn or planted in obscure folds the subliminal triggers. The television model's body language is also very important, as each carefully rehearsed precise movement can communicate subliminally—the direction of eye contact toward another body, touching, finger and hand contacts and directions, relationships with objects or people, and movements toward or from genital and erogenous areas.

### *Affection Substitutes in Humans*

An interesting example of the body contact type of TV commercial appears in the Mattel doll ads (see Figure 21). The Mattel Company has created an entire family of expensive dolls that each Christmas drains millions of dollars from the pocketbooks of parents throughout North America. Mattel's TV advertising is aimed in two directions: at the children and at mothers likely to be watching the programs designed ostensibly for children (many so-called children's programs have more adult viewers than children). The kids from age three up must be induced to put the heat on their parents to make purchases. Children under twelve purchase very little on their own, but if handled properly by advertising they can drive their parents up a wall for denying their little darlings those nationally advertised products which are the birthright of every American child.

The scenes from Mattel commercials are revealing when the motion is stopped. As you watch the actual commercial, you see a child playing with a lovely doll—fondling, caressing, kissing. Somehow, though, the message doesn't come through at the conscious level. Again, our minds just won't cope with the reality of what is going on. Stopping the videotape at key action points presents another view of The Baby Tender Love Syndrome.

The large number of oral, anal, and genital touching contacts between the child and the doll are startling, especially when they are viewed in stop motion. One conclusion is immediately apparent: Mattel and its research department know exactly what they are doing—which buttons to push that will turn on purchase motivation lights all over America. Sex is a basic drive, of course, within all humans—most psychologists maintain that it is *the* basic drive. Libido, or sexual development, begins at birth. Infants delight in playing with their genitalia—a normal, natural, even healthy way to pass the day if you are a small child. It might even be fun if you are an adult. But the American culture, possibly more than any other ethnic group in the world, prohibits genital play. Countless Americans have been told as infants, "Don't touch that dirty thing!"

Touching, just touching (not necessarily genital touching), is also forbidden at an early age in the North American culture. Mothers stop touching their sons and fathers their daughters at a much earlier point in time than is true in the tribal or more economically under-developed societies. American children are often embarrassed to touch other children—even of the opposite sex. Sex guilt and homosexual fear start early in the American culture.

Some anthropologists attribute this no-touch cultural policy to Oedipal conflict or incest fears which are present to some degree in all known cultures. It is often amusing to watch Americans avoid physical contact with each other, contact of a sort that would only be a demonstration of friendship or affection in another culture. Touching makes Americans most uncomfortable, even when it comes from their intimate friends. This is sad, especially because we have now discovered that tactile sensory experiences are extremely important to mental health.

Many psychologists maintain that touching, or touch-related sensory inputs, constitute the primary human sensory experience—far more critical to human survival and adjust-

ment than sight or hearing. Masters' and Johnson's discovery that 80 percent of their patients who are sexually inadequate could be turned on through a simple three-week training course in touching and interpersonal communication is culturally revealing—as was their informed estimate that 50 percent of North American marriages were sexually dysfunctional. Other American scientists estimate sexually dysfunctional marriages as high as 75 percent. Americans appear literally starved for tactile experience. This sensory deprivation seems to be culture-bound, beginning at a very early age.

From its commercials, Mattel has apparently researched the tactility problem in the American culture most carefully. In Baby Tender Love, they are offering the child a human surrogate which can be touched, kissed, fondled (even genetically caressed) with parental approval and encouragement. Recall the life-sized, anatomically complete plastic dolls being advertised in men's magazines. It might be important to question where all the love lavished upon dogs, cats, horses, dolls, and other objects which serve as human surrogates could be leading American culture. Why can't Americans love people?

What parent could be so cruel as to deny his child the socially approved touching experience available simply through the purchase of Mattel's Baby Tender Love? Regardless of price, the reward of deep emotional fulfillment promised the child would be worth every penny. These touching experiences were very likely denied the child's parents. It is almost reasonable to assume they would jump at the opportunity to provide their children with a synthetic substitute for emotional fulfillment which they were denied as children. The game is pathetic, but highly profitable for the toy manufacturer. And the game will be most strongly defended by those who are the most victimized.

During recent years many individuals in government and educational fields have voiced concern about children's advertising. Various investigations have generally failed to reveal anything other than what is superficially obvious: advertisers are making a hell of a lot of money out of manipulating kids manipulating their parents. But the actual mechanics of how it is done and the social effects—most importantly the long-range social effects—still remain a mystery to everyone but the manufacturers, their advertising agencies, and the motivation research specialists they employ. Is it possible that many people in American society have recognized the

subliminal game being played by advertisers, but have been unable to verbalize or make conscious this knowledge? Human perceptual defense mechanisms should never be underestimated.

## 10. The Man Who Almost Thought for Himself

Cigarette advertising is a fascinating and profitable business. In spite of the cancer and emphysema warnings—medical realities factually established beyond any shadow of a doubt—cigarette sales continue to soar each year. Tobacco companies are showing higher profits than ever before in their history.

The market that was created for so-called low tar and nicotine cigarettes has permitted manufacturers to almost double the number of cigarettes they can produce from the same amount of tobacco. The health-hazard publicity has actually helped increase profits. And, consumption has spiraled upward over the past decade in a dizzying rate of ascent. Tobacco company stocks are still among the American economy's most prized investments. The prodigious profits accumulated during the past ten years have enabled these corporations to diversify their investments. Most are now well on the way to becoming giant international conglomerates.

Smokers, the ones who have purchased the products, made possible these prodigious profits, and supported the diversification of the cigarette companies, have not fared so well. Many have ended their smoking careers with cancer of the mouth, lungs, or larynx; others have fallen to emphysema where they often linger on as vegetables for years; some have gone the route of coronary or circulatory diseases. Many of these degenerative diseases have their roots in smoking. One prominent physician put it this way: "Cancer is probably the most merciful of the diseases related to smoking. It kills—usually in six months or less. And, though there is a significantly higher proportion of smokers who develop cancer than nonsmokers, cancer is still a rather remote statistical probability. Emphysema is different. Any smoker simply has to smoke a large enough quantity over a long enough

time and he will develop emphysema. Emphysema patients sometimes struggle on pathetically for five to ten years as vegetables—needing constant care 24 hours a day."

The U.S. Government's involvement with the tobacco industry is intriguing. Government offices such as the Federal Trade Commission; the Surgeon General; Housing, Education and Welfare; and Consumer Affairs have known about the effects of cigarette advertising for decades. They have cautiously walked a tightrope on the issue. Many southern states' tax income depends heavily upon tobacco crops. Tax income from cigarette sales is a staggering emperor's ransom at both state and federal levels. Tobacco companies are, of course, heavy contributors to political parties.

In the face of overwhelming evidence of damage to the national health, the Federal government has merely supported the removal of cigarette advertising from television. Ad budgets for newspapers, magazines, and billboards have skyrocketed—as have cigarette sales. The denial of television advertising turned out to be only a minor inconvenience for the tobacco industry.

In 1970, \$84 million was spent by the U.S. Congress to improve tobacco interests. Indeed, in a special report NBC news revealed that the tobacco farmer today could not survive without government assistance. Someone must be getting the money from the tobacco crop. As usual, it isn't the farmer.

The U.S. Government guarantees a minimum price per acre for tobacco crops; it spent \$2.7 million in research directed at discovering new, more efficient ways to grow tobacco, and invested another quarter million dollars in foreign advertising for U.S.-grown tobacco. The United States is the world's largest tobacco exporter. The government grants a five cents per pack subsidy to tobacco companies for their exports.

In 1971, the last year for cigarette advertising on television, the industry spent \$11.4 million on that medium alone. Ad expenditures increased for cigarettes in 1972, concentrating on print and other media. Sales and profits have never been higher.

There are 44 million smokers in the United States. The U.S. Surgeon General estimated in 1972 that 300,000 individuals die each year as a direct or indirect result of smoking. This annual casualty figure is much higher than American losses in both the Korean and Vietnam wars.

All this, of course, was published long ago. Though everyone knows about the dangers of smoking, more people are smoking today than ever before. Why?

### *Big Money in Neurosis*

The subliminal content of cigarette advertising is a powerful agent—subverting both reason and logic. In effect, subliminal advertising content has initiated and sustained a compulsive neurosis among hundreds of millions of people throughout the world. Psychoneurosis is generally defined as "An emotional disorder in which feelings of anxiety, obsessional thoughts, compulsive acts and physical complaints without objective evidence of disease, in various patterns, dominate the personality" (*American College Dictionary*).

Take cigarettes away from any addicted smoker and his behavior conforms precisely to that of a psychoneurotic. It would be simple just to conclude that smokers were stupid—continuing their habit in the face of overwhelming evidence as to the damage they will experience. Smokers are no more stupid than anyone else manipulated by subliminal mass media content. They are merely acting predictably to what amounts to a posthypnotic suggestion from the advertisers. They are performing what they are commanded to perform by tens of millions of dollars of advertising annually. As these twentieth-century robots puff away their lives and breaths, they should understand at least part of how the advertising industry has been making fools and fortunes out of them for years.

Shortly after the respiratory disease statistics were released during the 1950s, the tobacco industry generally stopped trying to refute the well-documented medical facts. It continued a modest public relations campaign which tried to throw doubt and confusion over the medical research, but it essentially backed off. Trying to argue with scientifically supported evidence is a loser's game. Knowing that people's perceptual defenses will lead them to accept information they are already predisposed to believe, the cigarette advertising agencies came up with a most amazing gimmick—the cigarette filter.

Back in the early days of the filter, tobacco companies actually increased tar and nicotine content of cigarettes to overcome the weakened smoke inhalation sensations produced by the filter. This ruse was eventually discovered and

exposed. It really didn't make any difference, as the national market was gradually swinging toward a preference for weaker cigarettes—or at least the illusion of being weaker.

National research on cigarette taste or flavor and aromatics has revealed that very few people can differentiate between brands—or for that matter between filtered and non-filtered brands. Indeed, a sizable proportion of subjects are unable to determine for certain whether or not the cigarette is lit. Brand differences are established primarily through image manipulation in advertising, similar to the techniques used with beer, automobiles, deodorants, and other consumer products.

Carefully supervised tests have shown that no one could perceive a difference in taste between charcoal and cellulose filters. There is also no significant difference in the way these two filters screen out tars and nicotine. One is as ineffective as the other. There is an enormous fictional difference, nevertheless, in filter images. The charcoal filter is believed by some smokers to offer greater protection against cigarette chemicals entering the lungs than the cellulose filter, but both filters are perceived as protection for the smoker.

The reality of this fantasy, supported by an incredible mountain of consumer and public health research, is that filters have no effect whatsoever in reducing the damaging effects of tobacco smoke upon the human respiratory system. The whole thing is just another mass-media-perpetuated fantasy—and one which undoubtedly results in death and suffering for countless people each year who continue to smoke even though they are being irreparably damaged in the process. The phenomenon is shocking: most smokers know exactly what they are doing, but the media-supported image fantasies are so strong, they compel smokers to act against their own best interests. One tobacco company recently featured its brand as the thinking man's cigarette. The truth is that if the programmed robot could think for himself, he would have stopped smoking years ago.

### *Life Begins with Tasting*

Over many years virtually all cigarettes have, at one time or another, been sold on the basis of their "tastes." Consider the significance of the word *taste* in terms of the experiments discussed earlier that measured emotional reactions to words that differ only slightly from certain taboo words.

Significant affective (emotional) reactions were derived in polygraph and electroencephalograph tests of individuals' reactions to such words.

"*Tastes*," changing only the "a" to "e," becomes *testes*, or in the idiom of the days, *balls* or *balling*. With this added dimension, consider the meanings of the following copy quotes on taste:

- "In Case of Hot Taste Break Open." (Kool)
- "Tastefully Cool." (Kool)
- "The Great New Taste." (Kent)
- "A Good Time for the Good Taste." (Kent)
- "It's A Matter of Taste." (Viceroy)
- "Taste in her Cigarette." (Eve)
- "The Natural Choice for a Lady with Taste." (Eve)
- "A Taste That's Never Harsh or Hot." (Salem)
- "Tastes as Fresh as Springtime." (Salem)
- "Taste Me! Taste Me!" (Doral)
- "You Demand Good Taste." (Vantage)

In advertising the cigarette usually is illustrated as a phallic symbol. If the cigarette held by the models is *down*, sex has already occurred. If the cigarette is held *horizontally*, the model is warming up. When the cigarette points *upward*, however, the model is turned on and ready to go with a symbolic erection. The possible combinations of up, down, and horizontal cigarettes are virtually endless. A male model's cigarette might be *down*, the female model's *up*. She lights his cigarette, thereby turning him on, or up, or vice versa.

Sexual innuendoes in ad copy provide additional subliminal reinforcement for smoking. In the modern vernacular, words such as "Come," "Long," "Ball'n," "It," "Holder" (she who holds "it"), "Cool," and "Length" have strong sexual symbolism, especially when transmitted subliminally. Consider, "You can take Salem (males) out of the country (cunt)—but you can't take the country (cunt) out of Salem (males)." When these are used in advertising with sexual implications, the reader can gain some insight into what the unconscious part of the brain is reading into advertising copy. These words, at the subliminal level, can trigger strong emotional reactions within most any individual in our culture. And, the more rigid the morality and the more consciously inhibited the individual, the stronger the subliminal reaction.

Most cigarette advertising is directed at the unconscious for it is here that preferences are usually formed. The cigarette market illustrates well the power of subliminal com-

munication technique, because the products are either identical or very similar and brands cannot be sold on the basis of actual differences discerned through reason or logic. Smokers, in spite of their brand loyalties, are smoking little more than brand images. What is perceived as flavor or aroma can be influenced by the visual response to a package design.

Consider a Kent cigarette ad that was designed to appeal to the woman readers of *Cosmopolitan* (see Figure 24). Kent is a strong masculine name, suggesting a solid and distinguished Wasp heritage. Simply change the vowel from E to U, however, and KENT becomes the phonetic word symbol for the female genital. Keep this in mind as we review Kent ads directed at both male and female smokers.

The white, gold striped Kent package symbolizes cleanliness and purity with a male (gold) richness or royal heritage implied. Prominently displayed is the Federal Trade Commission report of November 1970 which gives the presumably low tar and nicotine levels of Kent. It is incredible that cigarette companies have learned how to use the FTC warnings as part of their advertising strategy, knowing well that most smokers have no idea which cigarettes are high or low in tar and nicotine content. Kent, incidentally, ranks quite high in tar and nicotine content compared with other king-sized cigarettes, according to the latest government analysis.

The ad portrays a woman's hand resting gently upon a man's hand that is holding a cigarette. Notice it is the man smoking, not the woman. The couple is just beginning dinner at an expensive restaurant, suggested by the plates and silverware, which are as yet unused. Their wine glasses are half empty. The evening appears promising—certainly to the woman for whom the ad was designed. But specifically what the evening promises our woman reader if she purchases Kent cigarettes is far more basic than a good meal at an expensive restaurant.

Genital symbolism is introduced by the man's phallic forefinger and cigarette. The woman model's thumb and hand form a vaginal symbol. The frequent reaction to symbol analysis is that a hand and finger could mean anything. Anyone analyzing symbolic content is immediately suspected of reading in his own interpretations. Indeed, this is always a possibility.

Therefore, the doubting reader is urged to hold the Kent ad on its side, with the man's hand pointing upward. In the

shadows under the woman's arm and wrist is the outline of a man's torso and legs. The spoon under her wrist projects from between the shadow of legs, forming an erect penis which is aimed at the base of the woman's thumb.

What woman smoker could resist the subliminal appeal of Kent cigarettes?

### *You Can Find "It" Anywhere*

Another Kent ad, appearing full page in four colors in *Look* magazine, was probably directed at both male and female smokers of all ages (see Figure 25). An attractive blonde model relaxes in the warmth of a hot sun. A lazy summer breeze moves wisps of hair across her tanned face. The expression around her mouth is suggestive of euphoric sensuality.

The model has apparently raised her sunglasses to let the warm afternoon rays reach her eyelids. She, of course, is holding a Kent in an upright position, symbolically ready for action.

What is she getting out of Kent? The answer is hidden in her right (the reader's left) sunglass lens. Block off everything in the ad except that lens. Try to find the answer yourself before reading further.

The subliminal trigger which will induce tens of thousands of people to switch to Kents is a finger gently caressing a vagina—masturbating, if you will—in the sunglass lens. The subliminal promise of Kent is therefore a good horny feeling. Who could resist? Kent proves, indeed, to be closely related to Kunt. Remember the ad copy which read, "Football 'n Kent"?

In case the reader's unconscious might miss the full meaning of the sunglass lens, the ubiquitous embedded SEX appears to the left of her little finger; the bottom of the subliminal S is on the cigarette. Another SEX appears, reading from the left side of the page, across the crosslines leading from the edge of the picture into her palm. A large SEX appears in the palm of her hand, an erogenous zone, the E formed by the outline of her thumb and hand against the background, and a large X appears below as two strands of hair against the black background. There is, as well, a SEX in her left sunglass lens and on the porous skin above each of her eyes. If you wish, you can find SEX appearing numerous additional times in the picture.

Benson & Hedges, with its series of broken cigarette ads, may have reached a high point in subliminal selling. The broken cigarette, of course, symbolizes an extra-long penis—suggesting B & H smokers will likely be perceived as excessively masculine. The long-suffering B & H models are always in some situation where their symbolic masculinity has gotten in their way.

The aging sign painter is a classic example (see Figure 14). As he letters away on the shop window in gold paint—gold is archetypally symbolic of masculinity and richness—his concentration has caused him to break his B & H 100 against the display window of the watch shop. This is the logical conscious message—not displeasing, perhaps, but as a sales message hardly justification for a full-bleed, four-color page in *Newsweek*.

What does the kindly old painter have an excess of at the moment? What in the picture is in abundant supply? Think about the question before going on to the next paragraph.

The answer would probably be *time*. The background of the ad is hung with clocks. Then the question becomes, so the old painter has plenty of *time; time* for what?

Of the six letters apparent in the layout, which one is most different from the others? Study the lettering, ATCHES, before proceeding to the next paragraph.

The S, of course. It has not as yet been painted. Only the stencil appears on the window.

The second most different of the letters is E—only half the E has been painted; the remainder of the letter still appears as a stencil.

So, the two most different letters appearing on the window are S and E, in the order of their differences from the other letters. There must be a third letter somewhere. See if you can find it before reading further.

The brush appears poised on the downstroke of the letter E. The eye follows the brush to the finger, hand, wrist, and arm. The arm rest crosses the arm to form the letter X. If the arm rest was actually being used to steady the painter's hand, it would be placed further up on the wrist.

The old painter has plenty of time for SEX. This message presumably reaches instantly into the unconscious psyches of millions of readers throughout North America. Of the hundreds of test subjects who have evaluated the ad, none has consciously perceived the basic sex theme. Should

Philip Morris International, which owns Benson & Hedges, want to make the sex consciously instead of unconsciously perceived, it would have been quite simple.

There is more, however. Assuming the unconscious may miss the major sex theme, the word is embedded throughout the ad. SEX appears on the inside seam of the shirt sleeve, the letter S appearing in the fold just above the letter B in Benson & Hedges. The E and X follow the seam upward, the X appearing just below the arm rest.

Another embedded SEX appears on the palm of the painter's hand. The S appears under the first knuckle of the finger next to the little finger. The bottom of the S is completed by the crossline in the palm. The E begins with the lifeline, the three horizontal lines crossing the base of the thumb. The X is formed by the lifeline extended up the wrist and a crossline on the wrist. Even the old man's hand is full of SEX.

Another SEX is embedded across the right side of the painter's neck, in the shadow. And another SEX appears above his left eyebrow. Still another appears vertically, the S in his right eyeglass—as one looks at the layout with the right side down; the E was developed between eyelid and eyebrow, and the X is above the eyebrow on the forehead. There are probably several SEX embeds in the layout that were missed.

The subliminal message says simply, you can get lots of sex with B & H. Though the cleverly designed ad is humorous, the fact that many people are unable to disobey commands given or implied at a level of unawareness is not funny, not when you consider that this single ad is at least partially responsible for some of the yearly statistics on cancer, emphysema, and coronary disease.

### *Fun and Recreation with Guilt*

One of the most penetrating jobs advertising does on the human psyche is to manage the individual's conflicts between pleasure and guilt. Products such as cigarettes must first be made to appear fun, exciting, sophisticated, or glamorous. Then the smoker must be given moral permission to have fun without guilt. This is not at all easy, considering North America's Puritan-Calvinist heritage.

A Virginia Slims advertisement is a classic example (see Figure 19). Published in many national magazines such as

*TV Guide*, *Glamour*, and *Redbook*—a magazine aimed at a reader market of young, married, lower-middle-class housewives with small children and a high school education or less—the ad shows the cigarettes are related to sex, and sex is related to the "new" woman and her right to self-expression.

The editorial content of *Redbook* suggests that the reader sees herself as neglected, unloved, and envious of women who are free to do their own thing. The young mothers see themselves as household drudges, entirely dependent upon husbands who are out in the world every day. The laboring scrubwoman in the black and white photograph, grinding away at her washboard, projects the *Redbook* reader's self-pitying image of herself. The ad ostensibly offers a 1972 engagement calendar, *A Book of Days*, which will remind her all year long of her unhappy lot as a housewife with the "added little stories, anecdotes, quotes and facts about women." These are obvious descriptions of the ad's primary features. But what is going on at the subliminal level? If we consider a photograph as time stopped at a particular instant, what was the attractive, leather-clad young woman doing or thinking about just before the picture was taken?

The model is shown in a relaxed, pensive posture—a thoughtful, reflecting, perhaps even slightly naughty expression on her face. She is obviously pleased with herself over something.

Her right hand is in an interesting position inside the coat pocket. The model's finger could be touching her genitals—likely her clitoral area.

The erect cigarette provides the hand with a phallic symbolism. Red lips, as was discussed earlier, are vaginal symbols. The model's thumb and forefinger are poised at one corner of the mouth, symbolically suggesting the clitoral area. Oral-genital interchangeability is a basic symbolic device in the mass communication industry.

The model's facial expression, posture, and hand positions now begin to make sense—the kind of sense that would justify the large-scale expenditures made on the advertisement run in *Redbook* and in other publications.

The copy, with a line break after the key word, gives the message an additional subliminal impact, "You've come a long way, baby."

The message provides the *Redbook* reader with moral

authority to obtain sexual satisfaction through masturbation. Control over one's own body sexually is the promise of Woman's Liberation and, of course via the ad, Virginia Slims. The V.S. smoker is free, independent, and self-satisfying. Virginia Slims, incidentally, translates at the subliminal level into *slim virgin*. Who needs men, anyway?

As an added motivational feature, subliminal SEXes are embedded in the model's hair and on her suede coat.

### *They'd Walk a Mile*

A very large proportion of ad content, aimed at the subliminal, involves a commercial exploitation of the consumer's secret miseries and self-doubts. Camel cigarette advertising—aimed at males in the lower-middle class, with high school or less education, married with young children, median age 25 to 30, exploits the feared sexual inadequacies of its market.

Some men have, for probably quite natural and justifiable reasons, an excessive fear of impotency or sterility—the fear they will be unable to impregnate women. Though all men share this fear to one degree or another, it would likely be strongest among cultural groups where manhood has been traditionally equated with the ability to make women pregnant. First- or second-generation children of immigrants from cultures where large families were an indication of a man's virility would be especially affected. Also affected strongly would be individuals with moral inhibitions about sexual indulgence—those who need to see sex morally justified only as a means of procreation.

Camel advertising promises a glorious fantasy future of a continually pregnant wife and a houseful of children—a subliminal promise likely to reassure even the most sexually insecure smoker.

What does the "camel" mean? Why is the cigarette-brand Camel one-humped instead of two? The one-humped camel is archetypally symbolic of pregnancy. One image study of smokers indicated the Camel brand image was overwhelmingly connected with strength, masculinity, potency, virility, and—unique for cigarette brands—fatherhood and morality.

Self-idealization, image or identity reinforcement of the Camel smoker was recently emphasized in a series of *image ads* widely published in many national magazines. The se-

ries, "They're not for everybody," projected the Camel smoker's view of himself: exclusive, down to earth, hard-working, morally righteous, solid citizen, strong, rugged, slightly younger than he actually is, and masculine. The image ads are, of course, loaded with subliminal SEX embeds.

An entirely different series of Camel ads—which ran concurrently with the image series—suggests something far more subtle than merely a strong self-image (see Figure 18). The first ad in this odd, almost inexplicable series of ads aimed at the unconscious mechanism in the minds of millions of smokers, simply showed a pint carton of chocolate ice cream on top of which is a spoon and at the bottom of which are two slices of dill pickle. This ad appeared in several very large circulation national magazines, including *TV Guide*. How, one might reasonably ask—as we can be certain the R. J. Reynolds tobacco company, which paid for all this advertising, must have asked—how can ice cream and pickles sell Camel cigarettes to lower socio-economic level working men?

The answer is actually so simple it should have been consciously—rather than unconsciously—apparent. Who eats ice cream and pickles? Pregnant women, of course, going through the pregnancy stage where exotic appetites drive their husbands to distraction. And, this pregnant woman is not just any woman—at least not to the market pursued by Camel cigarettes—she is the smoker's wife. The promise of the ad, subliminally, is a pregnant wife. Try not to laugh too loudly for just a moment. There is still much more to this idea.

Even though at the conscious level the man might want very much to avoid a pregnancy, the subliminal implication of the ad is that Camels would make him capable of implanting another pregnancy—a strong emotional appeal to a sexually insecure man. Remember the constantly reappearing theme in cigarette advertising—*anyone strongly fearing rejection may seek out means of oral gratification in smoking*.

The ice cream container is archetypally symbolic of woman; the full container means fertility in a woman. The spoon handle is symbolically phallic.

The subliminal embedding in this ad is curious. Hidden in the spoon, stuck into the chocolate ice cream, is a fetus. Several embedded SEXes are floating around in the ice cream, as well as between the lower pickle and the con-

tainer, where they are made to appear as fingerprints on the page.

As the ad says, "A man needs a good reason to walk a mile. Start walking." Consciously understanding the subliminal mechanics of this ad would make any reasonable man *run* instead of *walk*—but in the opposite direction.

The second ad in the series takes the prospective Camel smoker one step further on the road to seeking sexual security in a large family. The ad shows simply a crushed Camel pack resting upon a pool table cushion with a 10-ball in the background. The ad appeared in *Playboy*, *TV Guide* and in a number of other national publications.

"Empty" symbolically refers to bodily sensations. In man's most basic, unconsciously programmed context around which meanings accumulate throughout life, the separation of mother and child at birth results in a sensory experience of emptiness for the former and loneliness for the latter. The empty container (in this case, cigarette pack) is archetypally symbolic of birth. In many European cultures, such as Slavic, German, and English, the concept "empty" is symbolically the opposite of "pregnant."<sup>1</sup>

The textured wood, upon which the empty Camel pack rests, is symbolic of woman, according to Sigmund Freud's analysis of dream phenomena.<sup>2</sup> This subliminal message—connected with Camel cigarettes—would reassure the smoker of his sexual potency and virility. He has, at least symbolically, demonstrated his manhood by producing a child in his wife's womb.

The billiard ball is numbered symbolically 10—the "perfect" number used for centuries as a base for mathematics and monetary exchanges, as well as in science, art, and religion. The numeral "1" is symbolic of man, "0" of woman; the two numbers enclosed in a circle symbolizes the union of man and woman in marriage.

Dozens of embedded SEXes appear throughout the ad, further reinforcing the smoker's need for support against his fear of impotency and rejection—around the shadow area of the ball, throughout the green felt on the cushion, and in the finely textured wood of the table. The prospective Camel smoker should have run when he had the chance. It is now too late, symbolically at least.

<sup>1</sup>Theodore Thass-Thieneman, *Symbolic Language* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>*Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Avon, 1970), p. 391.

The third ad, illustrated by a royal flush in hearts, poker chips, ashtray, Camel cigarettes, and curling smoke, completes the trilogy aimed at the sexual insecurities of the North American working-class male.

The royal flush symbolizes that he has finally made it. The King and Queen symbolize father and mother. The Jack, or knave, and the Ace complete the symbolic family—the Ace symbolic of the craftsman child (think about how many service companies are called Ace) and the Jack symbolic of the clown child. The significance of the 10 as a symbol of family unity has already been discussed. The use of hearts has archetypally referred to the true inner self of man (the ego, love, fidelity) and has often been used in symbols as a personal pronoun—in effect, the big I AM. The entire family is in his hands.

The eminent position of the thumb is also highly significant. The hand is symbolic of man's creative or reproductive power. Hands involve very strong emotional meanings and fantasies. "Thumb" was derived from the Latin word meaning "to grow strong and to swell." Greek and German fairy tales and mythology told of creatures known as "thumblings" from whom our legendary Tom Thumb was derived, a small man who accomplished great things! The thumb is symbolically a strong phallic object, significant in the fantasies of early infancy or later childhood when young boys unconsciously identify their thumb with their genitals.

The idea presented symbolically by the ads of pregnancy, birth, and family is essentially an extension of the ego—a reinforcement for the smoker's fear of impotency, rejection, and sexual inadequacy.

Indeed, the Camel smoker now may find it much too late for *walking*, not to mention *running*.

The embedded subliminal words in the royal flush ad are somewhat more imaginative than in the other layouts in the series. The cigarette, symbolic of the male penis, is resting in the circle, symbolic of woman, provided by the ashtray. As the eye follows the smoke up, just above the ashtray rim, the smoke spells KISSES against the felt of the card table. As the smoke rises further above the poker chips, it outlines the shape of a pregnant woman. The poor woman is hooked again in support of her husband's fear of impotence.

SEXes have been sewn with near abandon throughout the felt tabletop and in the hand holding the cards. At the

bottom of the ashtray, just below the burning end of the Camel, is written in script the word FUCK, which seems like as good a thought as any with which to end our story about The Man Who Almost Thought for Himself.

## 11. The Avarice-Entrapped Media of Mass Communication

There is so much more that should have been included in this book—a Hilton Hotel room-service menu, SEX embedded from breakfast through dinner; a Las Vegas Hotel Sahara travel pamphlet saturated with mosaiced SEXes; the paper cover of Eldridge Cleaver's book *Soul on Ice*, SEXed throughout; elementary grade textbooks, designed and marketed for school administrators, loaded with every subliminal trick conceivable; the fascinating perversities of the subliminally loaded Sears catalogue; the U.S. Air Force recruiting ad—full-page four-color in *Life* magazine—which features Scott and LEM on the surface of the moon after he had planted the Stars and Stripes, with moon landscape, dust, flag, and LEM covered in SEX mosaic; the U.S. map behind John Chancellor during the NBC Evening News with SEX embedded across Northern Florida and Southern Georgia; the dark, erect penis that forms the lower jaw of the lion on the paper cover of Robert Ardrey's excellent book *The Social Contract*; these and many, many more. So many more, in fact, that the author has frequently believed, while researching this book, that he might be off on a paranoid delusion of some sort. There appears to be a subliminal dimension in everything that communicates in the mass media. The content presented here was a random selection of what seemed to be typical examples.

The 1972, highly-publicized \$1 million research study, sponsored by the U.S. Surgeon General's office—which tried to explore the “impact of televised violence”—is a dramatic example of the intellectual and moral bankruptcy of the so-called social sciences in North America. *TV Guide* referred to the study as the One Million-Dollar Misunderstanding.

The study was performed and analyzed by a large, carefully selected group of the most illustrious names in social science research—a truly blue-book stable of American in-

telligentsia. The findings of this group were pathetic nonsense. The authors summarized the totality of their findings as, “We have noted in the studies a modest association between viewing of violence and aggression among at least some children, and we have noted some data which are consonant with the interpretation that violence-viewing produced the aggression. This evidence is not conclusive, however, and some of the data are also consonant with other interpretations.”

### Nonsense!

Media has the proven, completely established ability to program human behavior much in the same way as hypnosis. And, if there is one common, dominant theme in American media that is even more pervasive than sex—it is violence. The taxpayers' money squandered on the nonsense game did not find a causal relationship between TV and violence because it would have produced an embarrassing problem for the Nixon administration, and three TV networks, and the advertisers—whose well-being appeared to have been a major consideration among those alleged scientists who performed the research.

The Surgeon General's TV study highlights the basic dilemma of social science research in America. Investigative and analytical technique—as well as social and behavioral theory—have been designed to maintain the system, not change it. If more money could be made by advertisers through the elimination of violence from TV as has been made by including it, a direct causal relationship would have been established years ago. It is entirely possible that both educational and governmental institutions—as well as their so-called experts and scientists—are victims of their own perceptual defenses which have blinded them to the realities (the violent realities) of America's past and present. This does not suggest that the illustrious social scientists, whose names appeared on the Surgeon General's report, consciously lied to the American people. Far worse than this, they first deceived themselves into believing in their own highly repressed fictions and merely passed these along as “scientific objectivity.”

Had the \$1 million study produced a firm causal relationship between TV and violence, all hell would have broken loose. Government, industry, and the media would have had a lot of explaining to do. Like so many studies of its kind, the final results were completely predictable long before the

research proposals were even written or the money appropriated. Predictability, of course, is the usual basis for referring to any conclusion as "scientific."

### No Easy Answers

The big question, finally, is: *What can be done?* To eliminate advertising would restrict the availability of mass media and have serious consequences in the national economy. Besides, this could provide antidemocratic groups with a tool to completely control mass media. America may yet discover an important role media can play in support of survival and adjustment in a world of growing dangers and complexity. Perhaps the media could be saved from itself.

A "cleanup" of advertising, however, would merely result in a continuation of the same game we have been playing. Even if all known techniques of subliminal persuasion were made illegal, the law would be impossible to enforce. With the enormous pressures in our society behind selling, it would only be a short time until someone figured out new techniques that circumvented the law. Laws, contrary to what the legal profession might claim, have not eliminated crime—they have only caused it to become more highly refined and sophisticated. The number of possible new techniques of subaudible, subliminal, and subtractile stimulation appear virtually endless. As clever, devious, and ingenious as the mass communication media have been in their development of subliminal technology, they have only scratched the surface. And, besides, the subliminal dimensions inherent in human communication has existed since far, far back in evolution. It is most unlikely it could be removed from the human psyche, even if anyone wanted it removed.

Two approaches to the subliminal phenomena must be explored immediately—probably by government or well-endowed private foundations. The explorations must be public, well publicized, and strictly maintained in the public interest by men who have nothing to gain or lose from what they discover, if this ideal is possible. What is already known, together with what will be discovered through additional research, must be integrated into the public educational systems.

There is very little public information available about subliminal influences. Virtually nothing is known at present by the general public, educators, and others who presume

to carry a public trust. Industry, commerce, and their research and advertising agencies, on the other hand, possess exhaustive analytical studies on the use and effects of subliminal stimuli. These proprietary studies should be appropriated in the public interest. Every major advertising agency in North America and its research and consultant agencies are known to have sponsored extensive study and research into subliminal perception—dating back as far as thirty years. Government agencies such as the FBI and CIA are also known to have conducted research and extensive investigations into the use and effects of subliminal phenomena.

In American universities, however, thirty years of behaviorist, experimental psychology have produced very little that would shed light upon the question. Virtually all the behavioral and social sciences in America are *verbal-definition oriented* instead of *reality-process-interrelationship-meaning oriented*. This academic compartmentalization of knowledge has defeated rather than encouraged the pursuit of truth. In the real world there is no such thing as sociology, psychology, and the like. These labels only survive as administrative conveniences in public institutions. Psychological assumptions, for example, are totally invalid if they fail to incorporate sociological, historical, economic, political, and other implications. But that is not the way university courses are taught.

Obviously, our so-called educational institutions, like our news and information sources, have unpardonably failed to alert us to what has been going on in the mass media, and very possibly in many other vital areas. The constant accusations that modern university education today is irrelevant are not without justification. One of the first things a young professor must learn when he starts teaching is not to rock the boat. Universities are in business to perpetuate themselves and the private empires of their administrators and political supporters. The socially approved wisdoms found most acceptable in classrooms involve more of a public relations activity for society and its institutions, rather than the source of new discoveries, insights, and conceptualizations.

### *Who's Been Watching the Store?*

Of the public relations oriented educational areas, one of the most intellectually retrograde has been the so-called schools and departments of journalism. These have purpose-

fully disregarded the entire subliminal polemic. Though most journalism professors have had limited professional experience, many have been aware for years of these subliminal practices. None has, as far as anyone can tell from the literature, ever introduced the subject into classrooms. Roughly 37,000 students in the United States are in training each year at universities that offer courses in mass communication or journalism. Very few of these students, if indeed any at all, are exposed to *ethics* (an area usually taught in philosophy), and these students have pathetically inadequate knowledge of *human perceptual systems*, what can be done with them, and the problems of *illusion-reality* (also usually taught in philosophy as epistemology or philosophical linguistics). Over ten thousand individuals enter the field of mass communication each year in America—supposedly college-trained in the public interest—but actually without any knowledge of even the questions, let alone the answers. These young people, however, have been fully prepared or, if you will, programmed to make money for their employers. Their education has been a super-automatic, high-speed brainwashing in behalf of the economy and its institutions. They have learned to accept any rationalization necessary to justify the status quo. Certainly as regards manipulation, the mass media have so far not served the public interest.

If, however, North Americans were to launch a large-scale educational effort on subliminal techniques, the most important work would be done in grade schools—even kindergarten would not be too early to begin. Language training in American society is an absurd anachronism. Children pass through twelve years of the world's most expensive education and emerge totally unqualified to live in the linguistic and symbolic environments in which they will spend their lives. They are taught to deal with language in terms of simplistic dichotomies—truth versus falsity, good versus bad, rich versus poor, and so on. They are carefully trained to identify words with things—the word "tree" is the same as the object "tree"; of course it can never be the same, one is a *symbol* and the other a *reality*. American children, moreover, are taught nothing about the perceptual abilities and limitations known to exist within their own bodies, but are encouraged to grow up mouthing such platitudes as "seeing is believing."

Human motives are rarely, if ever, discussed as a part of language training in primary schools. Ancient and primi-

tive sensory concepts, such as Aristotle's five senses, are still the basic orientation in most U.S. schools, even universities. Teachers often rationalize that any mention of the thirty-seven known senses might confuse children—an unsupportable argument when you consider that ten-year-olds can easily be taught to read several thousand words per minute.

The whole object of language or symbolism—whether it involves a verbal, a mathematical, a natural, or a physical language—is *meaning*. The major question upon which all language education must be predicated is, "*What does it mean?*" This is the real name of the game. It matters little whether you spell or punctuate correctly if you repress, confuse, or distort meanings without realizing *what* and *why* you are doing so. And, meaning must be considered at both conscious and unconscious levels. We already know quite a lot about our conscious perception. Almost nothing really new has been discovered in this area for a quarter of a century. Cognitive or conscious insights into behavior must now be integrated into knowledge of the subliminal, much of which has been around, even though often ignored by scholars, for centuries. It may well be time for humanists and interpretive psychologists to begin sleeping with behaviorists and experimentalists, in the interest of finding out what is really happening to the world and the people who live in it.

Research is the first major necessity. The first scientifically respectable book on subliminal perception was published in England in the fall of 1971.<sup>1</sup> There have been, of course, a large number of articles in professional journals, but these are unlikely to make much sense to a nonacademic audience.

Back in the late 1950s Vance Packard put together a journalistic treatise on the *hidden persuaders*. Packard was on the right track as he probed the so-called motivation research of his day, only he never pushed far enough. As it turns out, there was a great deal his sources did not tell him. Packard tried to perform a public service by popularly exposing what was going on in the media. He only scratched the surface, but was denounced widely as a shallow sensationalist trying only to make a fast buck. America should have listened more carefully. Two years after his book was published—though it became a best seller—Packard's thesis had been widely discredited by the media, the universities,

<sup>1</sup>N. F. Dixon, *Subliminal Perception: The Nature of a Controversy* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1971).

and, of course, by the businesses which control and support both. Everything went quietly and peacefully back to normal.

### *Those "Voices" May Really Exist*

There are a thousand new questions which must be asked in the hope of finding answers. Mental illness, the Twentieth-Century Plague, may be related to subliminal stimuli. What is vaguely called schizophrenia, for example, could be involved with an individual's perception of subliminal stimuli. A review of the schizophrenia theories of R. D. Laing and Karl Menninger—two of the many available—reveals that a surprising number of their adolescent cases testified endlessly about the words or ideas—often dirty words and ideas—older people put into their heads. These were often described as "voices" the patients were surprised to learn other people could not hear. Throughout the history of mental illness these voices had always been thought to be purely products of their illness—produced internally by disoriented mental processes. Maybe not. Could these words really exist embedded in funny books or grade school readers to enhance the sales of marketing-conscious publishers? Could these *imaginary* ideas have been subaudibly implanted in the sound tracks of television programs or commercials, in printed content or advertisements, or perhaps in the grooves of million-seller rock and roll recordings? As it should now be quite apparent to the reader, this is not at all impossible or improbable if you consider the extent to which we are being massaged by subliminals each day.

In both the Laing and Menninger theories of schizophrenia, the young patients talked about the role their parents played in their lives as models for behavior and morality. If the reader of the case studies merely replaced the word "parent," "father," or "mother" with the idea of *media*—making a mental note to include both print and electronic media—the implications are startling. One cannot help but wonder if these children could have somehow confused or combined media (perhaps TV) with parental models and influences, hopelessly losing themselves in the unreality of media and its illusions (*strongly reinforced with subliminal massaging*), which, of course, can never compare with the day-to-day stress and boredom of reality.

What portion—the question is appropriate—of today's mental illness is an escape into a permanent world of ideal-

ized fantasy resulting from the total impossibility of a reconciliation between the illusions and fantasies of media with the complex and frustrating realities of daily life? No one as yet knows the answers to these questions. But, as a society which hopes to survive what lies ahead during the next quarter century, we had better find out and quickly before the damage—and there is little doubt there has already been some damage—becomes irreversible.

The effects of subliminal stimulation upon mental health, especially where young people are concerned, must receive first priority. But secondly, there could be positive or constructive potentials in subliminal techniques. It appears reasonable to assume that a new theory of aesthetics may be developed that considers the two levels of human perception, *conscious* and *unconscious*.

What, for example, is the difference between a very good violin and a Stradivarius? There is an enormous difference, any concert violinist will maintain, but one which defies conscious empirical description. Is it possible the Stradivarius violin emits subaudible tonalities which are perceived by audiences as vague undefinable feelings?

Is it further possible that poets such as Milton stumbled upon verbal symbols, images, or icons which evoked subliminal reactions in the reader? The conscious information in *Paradise Lost* can be summarized quite briefly, categorized, quantified, computer-programmed, and stored on magnetic tape. It is most doubtful this tape would survive as meaningful literature or as a significant example of human experience. *Paradise Lost*, in its poetic form, will likely have deep significance as long as there is an English language—perhaps longer, as was the case with the poems of Homer and Euripides. How much of sculpture, painting, and other expressions of profound human meaning or feeling might be explained or at least partially understood in terms of subliminal stimuli? No one knows at this point, but we can only hope someone will try to find out.

It would be sad if this exposé of subliminal machinations—and the manipulative role played by people who have been trusted by millions of readers and viewers—ended up with merely a public relations soft soaping by both government and business. They will certainly try. There will be countless apologists and apologies in behalf of the media and the businesses whose products media sells. The author hopes however, enough people will become so indignant and

outraged that they will demand, through their political leadership, immediate and forceful action resulting in intensive research and a widespread educational program.

### *All the News That Sells*

*Media has most clearly proven itself socially irresponsible and hopelessly entrapped by its own avarice.* The wastelands of television, one might hope, will be irrigated and reseeded with integrity. Some form of large-scale media surveillance, perhaps by government or a private trust, must be instituted—perhaps not with the power of censorship but certainly with the power to expose publicly communication techniques that operate against the public interest. Federal commissions on the press and other forms of public communication have already been proposed and discussed in both the United States and Canada. But, they must be given power, authority, talented and dedicated public servants, adequate financing, and be totally free of partisan favoritism or political pressures.

It is also hoped that subliminal manipulations will provoke an intense public examination of the role manipulation plays or should play in our society. How defensible is mass manipulation?

The *behaviorist* would probably argue, "Yes, why not, as long as it is in a good cause." In other words, if the motives are pure and the end is love, happiness, and goodness, then manipulation is justified. The obvious problem, of course, is who shall decide what is to be considered good or even desirable?

The *pragmatist* business orientation of media and advertising would likely put the polemic in these terms: "What in hell are you complaining about? Look what we have done for you. Americans are better fed, better automobile, better clothed, and so on and so on, than any other nation in the world. So we use the subliminal devices, to help you decide to do what you already wanted to do. We keep the products and services moving. And, this is no small accomplishment." There are some obvious flaws also in this line of argument—ecological imbalances, resource depletion, possible psychopathological effects, for example. But they are quite correct in one fact: mass manipulation has resulted in an incredible material prosperity for virtually everyone in North America

—even our ghetto inhabitants live better than most of the world's population.

Finally, the *humanist* or *existential* philosophers and psychologists would likely say: "Look! When you manipulate people, regardless of your motives, you take away their right to decide for themselves *what they want to do and who they want to be.*" Humanists usually lean strongly on free will as an ideological foundation.

The polemic very likely has no simple, single answer. It is imperative, however, that the whole argument become a public issue. We repress or hide from ourselves these polemics only at great peril.

This book was purposely not written for exclusive academic consumption. With a small mountain of research data from which to draw, it could have been dribbled out, one pedantic article at a time, over a period of several years. In several ways this might have been a preferable procedure. The evidence would have been thoughtfully probed, more exhaustively tested, argued, and further examined as to its significance. One thing appeared quite certain from the research: the subliminal perception issue is of enormous significance to modern man.

This author believes the discussion should not be restricted to the peculiar jargons of academia which often obscure the simplest, most obvious facts or details. The academics have sat unproductively for far too long, unwilling to take on the enormous power concentration behind the media. The issue must go public and quickly. Someone must ask the social and behavioral scientists who were highly paid to develop subliminal techniques for the communications industry—why they said nothing in violation of professional ethics and the public trust.

This book has also been an attempt to examine another form of cultural programming used daily on an enormous scale throughout North America. The programming is invisible and masquerades under the disguises of truth, objectivity, honesty, fairness, morality, virtue, and even love for your fellow man.

Our modern affluent culture urges us to be reasonable. The notion that we will all love each other if only we will be reasonable, communicate, find the right words, and look for a happy, equitable compromise is apparently basic to American life today—as many would like to believe it exists. Being reasonable is not necessarily the road to eternal hap-

piness, as many philosophers have pointed out for a long time. Being reasonable is very often simply an open invitation to be raped. So, this book will pointedly deny the rational premises of being reasonable. It is a studied and pre-meditated attempt to be most unreasonable, indignantly unreasonable. The shattering realization that one has been cheated, lied to, manipulated, exploited, and—on top of it all, the final indignity—laughed at for being gullible is simply too much to endure further without at least trying to fight back.

### *Symbolological Degeneration*

There is, of course, more to America's present national dilemma than just the loss of integrity in the language and symbolisms of the society. But, the symbolic dilemma is major, even basic, and as good a place as you can find at which to aim the first rocks. Several modern writers have blamed the exhaustion and perversion of symbolic values, meanings and functions twisted in the interest of commerce and industry, as almost a unique symptom of American corruption. The problem currently appears more intense in America than in any other nation.

In man's slow, painful evolution, symbols acquired meaning and significance over literally centuries of experience. Symbolic values arrived and disappeared very slowly—certainly incorporating as they evolved various survival and adjustment mechanisms. This symbol-making and symbol-sustaining ability is believed to be the primary reason for man's survival as a species.

Today, we use, modify, manipulate, destroy, invent, and exhaust our symbolic languages at a staggering rate. New words and symbolic concepts by the thousands enter our languages each year. Perhaps roughly the same number annually disappear. Nothing symbolic in our society seems to have more than a very transient and superficial dimension of meaning. We no longer believe in our symbols—elements many writers have called the glue which holds together societies, languages, cultures, and human existence. We are cynical, doubtful, alienated, distrustful, and frequently bewildered by the spinning, hypnotic effect of omnipresent media-induced symbolic pressures upon our conscious and unconscious minds.

The general *conscious* versus *unconscious* or *cognitive* versus *noncognitive* polemic has endured well over a quarter a century between the two academic polarities—psychological behaviorists; and their opposing schools, humanistic, Gestalt, and the rest. Very quietly, however, while the academics have argued over how many angels could dance on the head of a pin, commercial research organizations—sponsored in their confidential proprietary research by large corporations—made enormous progress in learning how the human condition could be molded, used, and controlled in the interest of profit. This research was never made public. Indeed, one research executive who completed over 300 projects during ten years of working for large U.S. companies, never had a single project which he could publish or even publicly discuss. The million dollars, spent in behalf of the corporations by this single executive on research, produced insights and information only meant to benefit individual businesses in their life-and-death struggle for competitive corporate survival.

So, all the power of corporate enterprise, the mass media which it supports, and the government it sustains in power—not to mention the educational institutions supported by this affluent establishment—have a collective interest in pretending subliminal perception is only a romantic notion dreamed up by some radical, irresponsible troublemaker.

### *In the Most Powerful Office*

As this book began to develop, late in 1971, a chapter with illustrations was forwarded to Mrs. Virginia Knauer, Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs in the Washington office of President Richard M. Nixon. Included were the Gilbey's advertisement as well as a dozen or so other simple, clear examples of subliminal advertising. The material was carefully chosen—so simple a child could understand what was going on. At the time, Mrs. Knauer was receiving national publicity over her so-called "deep investigations" into American advertising. In what turned out to be just a superficial public relations and vote-soliciting probe, the President's office was then making another gesture to pacify the American public's growing discontent with the quality of life its country now offers.

Mrs. Knauer's consumer affairs office refused to even discuss the possibility of subliminal perception techniques in

advertising. Several of her department's consultants, it was discovered, had reviewed the subliminal materials. They reported that, indeed, something was going on in the advertisements which seemed to involve a "generally unknown technique of persuasion." The entire matter was hushed up. A secretary employed in Consumer Affairs at the time reported that for several weeks after the manuscript had been passed around the office, the subliminal perception material was the main subject of conversation. Suddenly, word was passed that the subject was not to be discussed any further—internally or externally.

Considering the U.S. government involvement with advertising agencies and their media, and the enormous research budgets available, it is simply unbelievable that present applications of subliminal technique are not known within that government. Consider all of the interesting applications which could be made by the CIA and FBI in the development of new techniques for manipulating subversives or converting, which instead of overthrowing governments who disagree with U.S. foreign policy; by the military, which instead of only selling the Pentagon, might be able to include the Brooklyn and Golden Gate bridges; or, by the President's office, which by subliminal SEX embeds might sustain the illusion of virility and youthful dominance far, even farther, into the outer reaches of senility.

It may be reassuring to know that Washington has carefully protected the subliminal technology of mass media so it doesn't fall into the wrong hands.

## With Thanks

The author is most grateful to the over 1,500 patient, long-suffering, and persevering students who participated in classroom lectures, discussions, and often heated debate during the three years this book was in preparation. Many of the illustrations will be familiar to these students. In any respect, student support, encouragement, critical discussions, and creative insights were invaluable to the explorations into subliminal mechanisms. The greatest regret is that there was never enough time for long, probing bull sessions with these questioning and critical young minds. But, then, there is never enough time.

Special mention must be made of the contribution of a handful of young scholars who worked long and often unrewarded hours as teaching and research assistants. Included are John Cardiff, who the author hopes will one day publish a rock-shaking probe into the world of popular music; James Johnston, whose powers of perception and intellectual agility are far greater than he yet suspects; Lee Palser, a tough, bright ex-journalist determined to write the great Canadian novel; John and Louise Clutterbuck, two talented young people looking for new mountains to climb; and Peter Stemp, one of the most gifted and creative students of life the author has known. Jean Stone, a very beautiful secretary, contributed a very clean-typed final manuscript.

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There are many, many more who should be mentioned. They would, however, fill an encyclopedia. To everyone who contributed—simply, Thank you!

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What is the sexiest thing in *Playboy*.  
(Clue: Forget about the centerfold.)

---

Why the camel on the cigarette pack has just  
one hump.

---

Where the dirty words in an ad for children's  
dolls can be found.

---

How an ice cube in a liquor ad can turn you on.

---

The place in a TV commercial where you can view  
an obscene act.

---

The castrating image the *Cosmo* girl  
is provided with.

---

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For my dearest wife, Jan, and our pixie, Christina—lovely ladies who share and enrich my life. They have never doubted impossible things are always possible when part of the good fight.

"There is no use in trying," said Alice; "one cannot believe impossible things."

"I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour each day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

Lewis Carroll  
*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

# CONTENTS

*Foreword: The Battle of Beliefs*  
*Author's Warning*

ix  
xvii

## PART ONE SUBLIMINAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY: Bending Minds in Pursuit of Power and Profit

1	For Those Who Think They Think for Themselves	3
2	How to Get Inside the Open Mind—Undetected	35
3	The Underside of Consciousness	64

## PART TWO LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: The Tools of Indoctrinability

vii

4 Media—The Brainwashing Laundromat	93
5 How We Know That We Know That We Know	115
The Logic of Illogic	
The Logic of Identification	
The Logic of Excluded Middles	
The Logic of Contradiction	
6 The Real Thing—Symbolic Realities	148
7 Cause and Effect—The Greatest Illusion of All	164
8 The Expectations of Stereotypes	180
9 Self-Fulfilling Prophecies	205
10 The Self-Sealing World of Objectivity	227
11 The Permanently Closed Mind	249
<i>Epilogue</i>	265
<i>Appendix</i>	267
<i>Bibliography</i>	269
<i>Index</i>	283

*Illustrations follow page 140.*

# FOREWORD

## THE BATTLE OF BELIEFS

Orwell's 1984 actually occurred around 1934. We were just too busy to notice.

Marshall McLuhan

Genius is the capacity to see ten things, where the ordinary person sees only one, and the person of talent, two or three.

Ezra Pound

Over fifteen years have passed since Wilson Bryan Key first warned us to "Watch ourselves!" much as the Greek god Zeus once cautioned Narcissus. Narcissus had narcotized himself by endlessly staring at his mirrored image in a pond. He never realized

the idealized reflection's identity and fell deeply in love with it. As in the ad-media mirror in the U.S., the reflected image was always kind, noble, brave, wise, fair, good, generous, beautiful, and truthful. Narcissus eventually perished because he could not sort out reality from fantasy.

Since the first edition of *Subliminal Seduction* in 1973, and Dr. Key's two subsequent books on subliminal persuasion, few other subjects have had as great an impact upon large reading audiences. It would be difficult to find a college student since 1973 who has not read, or at least heard of, these books. They are still required reading in many high schools and universities. Their message has spread far beyond classrooms into Senate committee hearings, into regulatory agency rulings, and even into international discourse on media ethics.

Like the Ouroboros (the snake that bites its own tail) from ancient Greek mythology, the books have become paradoxes. Dr. Key has raised the world's awareness about advertising media's rape-of-the-mind rip-offs. His warnings have also provided technical primers on how to manipulate human behavior. Though the ad industry publicly denounced the books and attempted to discredit the author, his writings are widely used by ad agencies, media research psychologists, and others who labor in the Machiavellian orchards of deceit and human exploitation.

Most of us are constantly pressured to change our behaviors. As consumers, we are endlessly enticed by advertisers to buy products, brands, and services in their merciless pursuit of our discretionary incomes. As voters, we are incessantly persuaded and hounded toward some point of view by politicians who compete for power over our lives and profits for their sponsors. As social and ethical beings, we are bombarded by religious and ideological zealots of countless persuasions to become their *true* believers and their generous and obedient slaves. Some of these efforts are overt, clearly perceivable, on the table, so to speak. Others are far more subtle, even invisible to the conscious mind. Virtually all these attempts to solicit our patronage and change our behavior are effective in one measure or another. Even those of us who resist are changed by our resistance. Collectively, these efforts have made the U.S. into an ideological wasteland, with increasing numbers of people desperate to find something—often anything—of value to believe

in. This desperation makes them uniquely vulnerable to the industries that manufacture and manage their belief systems.

Most people—especially in our media-managed culture—are unaware of the masterful strategies utilized to direct their destinies. Most are educated to ignore their participation in the collective cultural conscious, which makes them susceptible to indoctrination. Vulnerability to manipulation was imposed early upon Western cultures by centuries of conditioning in the logic and language systems described by the philosophers of ancient Greece. The illusion is still popularly cherished that humans individually—all on their own—are in total control of their own thoughts, values, and behaviors. We believe that we think entirely for and by ourselves. This fantasy feeds a self-perception that is currently perilous to human survival and adjustment—an intellectual Achilles' heel.

It is easy to become distracted by the riotous illustrations in Dr. Key's books. They are simultaneously hilarious and exquisitely painful. Readers often appear uncertain whether to laugh or cry. The pictures unmask the incredible vulnerability of people to persuasion technologies, the pompous pretensions of morality, piety, convictions, and ideologies that allow us to be manipulated in any direction worthy of an investment in time, money, and power. They reveal that the slogan "truth in advertising" was just another damned lie dreamed up by an ad hustler. They also strip the camouflage the society's leadership have developed to veil their incalculable greed, their merciless misuse of human hopes for decency, honesty, and fairness. The ad-media industries loudly and continuously proclaim what they have altruistically done *for us*. We should long ago have inquired about what they were doing *to us*. The illustrations may mask the more significant, underlying nature of the linguistic-cultural system that permits and makes acceptable the media rip-off. Media critics have often concentrated upon the trees and missed the forest.

Aside from the sheer entertainment provided by this exposé of obscenity masked as respectability, of naïve gullibility masked as sophistication, of lies and deceptions masked as truth, perhaps the most significant portions of the text are the probes into archetypal structures of both language and culture. The use and misuse of Aristotle's laws of logic (which are not really laws at all) are rarely criticized today by a society persuaded that it has achieved so many

ultimate truths. These sections of the book are, by themselves, worth the purchase price.

One of the greatest enigmas throughout history continues to be the nature of the human mind. Evidence on how the brain receives, processes, stores, retrieves, and communicates to other brains is incomplete, hypothetical, and inconclusive. Voluminous research by a vast number of scientists and philosophers has attempted to construct order from the complexity and seeming chaos of the mentation and language processes. Chaos, doubt, and uncertainty still prevail in spite of everything. The operations of the human brain have nothing even remotely to do with those of an electronic computer, though this has long been a profitable ploy of the industries involved in producing computers. There are infinitely more questions about the brain and how it functions than there are answers. It appears that this imbalance may persist indefinitely.

In most areas of disciplined inquiry, researchers do not work or theorize in a vacuum. The so-called scientific method is inextricably involved with language, culture, and both conscious and unconscious human motives. The ways in which a problem is perceived; how the hypotheses, syntheses, and methods are stated; which evaluative procedures are applied; and the principles and concepts utilized for theorization all guide evaluations and conclusions both consciously and unconsciously. The notion of objectivity is as mythological as were the gods atop Mount Olympus. Conclusions, scientific or otherwise, must be expressed in simplistic, linear, fragmented verbal or mathematical abstractions.

Reality is infinitely complex, multiple, integrated, constantly changing, and subject to the vagaries of human perception. Verbal language, and even mathematics, is simplistic, definition-limited, orderly, sequential, rigid, and nonchanging. Languages have in themselves nothing directly to do with the realities they attempt to describe, except possibly in the remote vagaries of human perceptual abstraction. Words, things, and the human perceptual uncertainties involved in each ensure that truth, if such an abstraction could be meaningful, may always remain just beyond the grasp of human intellect. Functional, pragmatic, tentative, verbal, or mathematical generalization appears the closest humans may ever approach to an ultimate, definitive—though always tentative—truth about anything.

Were the above problem widely recognized, there would exist a much lower probability that humans will vaporize themselves in some proud and patriotic attempt to save the world from whatever mass neurosis may be current. If Dr. Leakey is correct, the human species has been around some 4½ million years. Thus, every isolated event perceived by humans is merely a tiny drop in a very large ocean. Simple survival and adjustment as worthy, tolerant, loving, unselfish beings might even be permitted to evolve as a fundamental doctrine of human existence. The doctrine should remind each of us, every morning as we look into the mirror, that in spite of the thousands of gods, philosophies, sciences, and unquestionable “truths” humans have created with language throughout their history, no one has as yet discovered how to make even a worm.

Marshall McLuhan called those elements within an individual’s environment, with which he or she interacts consciously and unconsciously, the “environmental surround.” There are always so many perceptual particles within this surround that no individual could conceivably concentrate consciously upon everything at the same time. Conscious awareness, therefore, is always fragmented. Because visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory perceptions are innumerable, continuous, and overlapping, the conscious mind cannot deal simultaneously with all of them. The ability to isolate, concentrate, or abstract a small portion of the perceptions available at any given moment into a linear, logical, definition-oriented language process is considered the basis for evaluations of *intelligence*—whatever that may mean from day to day and from person to person.

The process appears to be a concentration upon a small portion of perceptions to the exclusion of competing ones. Consciously perceived reality is usually a vast oversimplification, an abstraction, of actual perceivable reality. The myriad of perceptions that conscious awareness has deemphasized, set aside, placed out of focus, subordinated to ground, and/or repressed, remain in the brain’s unconscious storage for varying periods of time. Perhaps some perceptions are stored permanently.

You can experience the process by stopping to consciously consider the perceptual stimulation going on while you read these pages. If your concentration on these words is intense enough, most

of the peripheral perceptions will register only at an unconscious level until your attention is diverted from figure (the words) to some portion of ground (peripheral perceptions). Perceptions, of course, can be internally generated as well as externally stimulated, as your concentration wanders from these words to a momentary thought of a well-turned ankle you perceived while crossing the campus this morning. Or, the words may diminish in your attention as they elicit associations with other subjects, authors, and arguments.

These peripheral unconscious perceptions can often be brought to consciousness later through such techniques as hypnosis or narcoanalysis. Under hypnosis, subjects often recall in great detail perceptions of license plates and other minutiae that were unavailable consciously. Numerous experiments have even recovered conversations heard during surgery under anesthesia. All the sensory inputs appear to function continuously, with prodigious quantities of information pouring into the brain, but only small bits and pieces surfacing in conscious awareness. Perception is *total* and *instantaneous* at the nonconscious level but extremely limited at a conscious level.

For 2,000 years the environmental surround of Western cultures has focused consciously on what seems logical, linear, rational, connected, verbal, arithmetic, and symmetrical. The traditional language-logic system was initially defined by Aristotle, though the ideas reach as far back as Hammurabi's Code around 3000 b.c. The verbal-arithmetic description of the physical world by Newton, the symmetrical view of spatial relationships in the geometry of Euclid, the neat, systematic, reasonable, logical views of reality began to explode by the early twentieth century. These language-organized certainties slowly came to seem mere fantasy. Very little within human perception any longer appeared certain, permanent, unassailable. Organized views of language and culture began to evolve as wishful thinking, projection, and construction. Powerful contributions from writers such as Marx, Darwin, and Freud further assaulted conventional wisdom. Traditional language-logic and order tumbled into shambles. New, far more subtle views of the human animal slowly eroded away the certainties of the earlier, more simplistic modes of thought.

Non-Aristotelian logic entered science, art, and philosophy.

Non-Euclidean geometry devastated traditional ways of viewing spatial relationships. Non-Newtonian physics became the basis for quantum mechanics and relativity, the new science of nuclear and electron particles. Considerations of the human unconscious rendered obsolete earlier platitudes about human perception and motives. The world responded to the new modes of thought, logic, and their threat to vested interests, conventional wisdom, and the status quo with confused defensiveness.

The old ways never relinquish their grip easily or painlessly. They had evolved to represent the vested interests of Western civilization. The new modes of thought and reason were threatening, often violently so. Religious, social, political, economic, scientific, and philosophical vested interests fought tenaciously to suppress change and innovation. Yet slowly, inexorably, the best, most logical of all worlds came to be perceived by more and more as the worst and most illogical.

Anyone alive today will complete his or her life experience in the middle of this largely unseen revolution in ideas, concepts, values, traditions, ideologies, and human relationships. The fantasies of certainty, permanence, and simplicity have become obsolete, often tragically. Comprehension of *process* and *change* has become a survival imperative. The imperative is also driven by the continuing crises attributable to exponential world population growth, the depletion of natural resources, the inequitable and unacceptable distribution of power and wealth, the devastation of environment by pollution and greed, and the most frightening specter of all hovering as a dark shadow over the earth's struggling populations—devastation by nuclear accident or warfare.

It appears, therefore, vital to survival that humans learn to overcome—at least in some measure—their vulnerability to manipulation. If democracy and freedom are ever to evolve into meaningful abstractions beyond the self-serving, dishonest, platitudinous rhetoric of political campaign speeches, humans must largely break out of traditional modes of thought. This will be painful, most painful. Simplistic *common sense* may constitute the world's most dangerous perceptual illusion. Common sense is often uncommonly deceptive and should always be considered with a stern admonition to *beware!*

Those who still adamantly reject the prevalence of subliminal

manipulation technology fall into two general categories: those whose vested interests lie in the continuing exploitation and manipulation of humans, including many who exploit commercial, religious, and political fanatacism; and those who reject the notion of subliminal persuasion because they hate, distrust, and dislike whatever is new. The new has usually been perceived as threatening, subversive, and heretical.

Dr. Key has done a masterful job of exploring the continuing search for truth through which humans may survive their follies, foibles, and technologies. His insights into the world's propaganda battle of beliefs may contribute significantly to the struggle for world peace and understanding. The search for truth, of course, is a far different matter than the discovery of an *eternal* truth. Once an *eternal* truth is discovered, learning, progress, growth, and freedom become restricted, biased, and narrowly focused. Human options inevitably are diminished. After all, if a truth were really true, for all time, in all places, for all peoples, there would be little need to believe in it, propagandize it, struggle over it, and murder in its name.

Watch yourselves!

Dr. Bruce R. Ledford  
Professor of Media  
Auburn University  
Auburn, Alabama

## AUTHOR'S WARNING

Readers can make practical use of this book in two ways. The ideas and information can be used by anyone in a media-dominated environment to protect themselves against exploitation by picture and word symbols. Readers should be able to achieve greater autonomy—freedom upon which to act or believe. Certainly they should free themselves in some measure from the dehumanizing effects of media merchandising upon their personalities and relationships.

The second practical use of the book is for readers preoccupied only with media-propagated self-indulgence. It should prepare them for profitable careers in advertising and public relations. Indeed, since *Subliminal Seduction* appeared in 1973, subliminal techniques have become far more persuasive, sophisticated, technologically advanced, and more profitably applied to anesthetize the U.S. population against the intrusion of reality into their daily lives. Few advertising or media people are unfamiliar with my

three earlier books. Many appear so informed they could pass rigorous examination on the subject. In public, however, they steadfastly maintain innocence, repeating ad nauseam that subliminal perception does not exist. The standard industry defense alleges my "dirty mind" was responsible for the entire controversy. Ad executives, professors, and other assorted media apologists refuse to discuss the more than 500 published research studies that confirm the effects of subliminal stimuli on ten measureable areas of human behavior.

The books were intended as exposés, critiques, revelations about the most dangerous affront to sanity, freedom, and survival that now threatens the earth's population. Subliminal indoctrination may prove more dangerous than nuclear weapons. The substitution of cultural fantasies for realities on a massive, worldwide scale threatens everyone in this precarious period of human evolution. Present odds appear to favor total devastation.

The paradox of a book actually serving what it attacks is not unusual in the history of ideas. Any enterprising capitalist will carefully study new intellectual developments in the socialist world to learn about weaknesses in both socialist and capitalist economics just as executives, managers, and leaders in socialist countries carefully study Western capitalism. The study of competition and critics is the first rule of survival. At the same time, it is necessary to attack or pretend to attack competition at every opportunity.

Nothing in human perception—which includes everything humans know or think they know consciously and unconsciously—is what it appears to be. Part I of this book deals with pictures, ads for the most part, in an update of the three earlier books. Part II concerns language and culture, and their effective brainwashing of populations to prefer fantasies over realities.

Media industries are great fun to molecularize—to take apart in small, revealing pieces. Their dissected anatomy embarrasses the manipulators and frightens their victims. There is much to be learned from them about how humans think or do not think. Ad media demonstrate human venality and gullibility at its worst and reveal how languages, pictures, and cultures serve more to enslave than to enlighten, unless audiences are educated to discriminate between fantasy (how we wish the world existed) and perceptual

reality (that limited fraction of reality available to conscious perception).

Advertising operates from an almost universal simplistic human motive—to sell, to sell, to sell. By comparison, both fine art and literature are created out of motivational complexity—diffuse, contradictory, and paradoxical. Deeper artistic insights involve the artist's unique perceptions of the world. This may be why creative artistic productivity often survives through centuries as meaningful human experience.

The manipulative motives of advertising and public relations produce images for momentary conscious perception, repression, and unconscious memory storage. They are created to be unacknowledged, consciously insignificant audience experiences. This, indeed, can be termed the Age of Manipulation.

Humans often do not appear to have learned much from the thousands of years in world experience behind them. In the U.S., history is perceived to have begun with John Wayne at the Alamo or, for the young, with the Beatles. Our culture, arranged to optimize the return on media investments, rarely permits learning from experience. This may constitute modern man's Achilles' heel.

This book is intended to change the way individuals perceive the world in which they live. If it succeeds, nothing will ever again be quite the same.

Part One

# SUBLIMINAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

BENDING MINDS  
IN PURSUIT OF  
POWER AND  
PROFIT

# FOR THOSE WHO THINK THEY THINK FOR THEMSELVES

We are all at the mercy of influences over which we are consciously unaware and over which we have virtually no conscious control.

Robert Rosenthal, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*

The people want to be deceived, let them be deceived.  
*Populus vult decepi, decipiatus.*

Cardinal Carlo Caraffa to Pope Paul IV

In many ways creativity and mental illness are opposite sides of the same coin.

Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art*

This book is about the human misuse of humans. High-technology mass persuasion has achieved levels of sophistication far beyond what most individuals imagine. Most still desperately cling to the delusion that they think for themselves, determine their own destinies, exercise both individual and collective *free will* (the great myth that underlies democratic ideology); that advertising works in the interest of the consumer; and—perhaps the greatest self-deception of all—that they can easily discriminate between fantasy and reality. This book attempts to throw the proverbial monkey wrench into these worn, nonsensical platitudes.

The following insights can be utilized to fight off the daily assault of misrepresentations so devastating to freedom and autonomy. By consciously knowing how the rascals get inside your head, you at least have the option to fight back. Technologies of exploitation appear far more developed in capitalist than in socialist nations, though the question is academic. Technology is never a successful secret. It remains available to anyone with time, money, and motivation. The *engineering of consent* assaults human perception at both conscious and unconscious levels, especially the latter. Once the group or collective unconscious is programmed into what has been called culture, virtually any bill of goods can be sold at conscious levels.

Psychological indoctrination also exists through language structures, cultural assumptions, and highly malleable perspectives toward the self, the world, and perceived relationships with what is casually accepted as reality. In terms of survival and adjustment, these may be far more significant than the obscene imagery embedded in advertising.

This book examines efforts to make the end justify the means—a perversion that never disappears in human evolution. Not long ago, the U.S. appeared willing to destroy the populations of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to save them from communism. Communism, of course, is an idea and, like most ideas, is interpreted differently throughout the world. The folly of sacrificing millions to the perception of an idea should be apparent but is not. Humans are uniquely dangerous because their perceptual blindness does not permit them to know they are dangerous. There are zealots in world governments willing to justify mass murder in the name

of fanatic, ideological fantasies. This willingness to betray the human spirit through arrogance, ignorance, “absolute” knowledge, dehumanization, and the mindless pursuit of profit and power should, but rarely does, frighten us.

Humans appear difficult to frighten; they forget so easily. Mankind’s most ennobling pursuit throughout history has been the search for truth. Each time, however, truth was believed to have been discovered, tragic mischief resulted. Converts to the latest version of *truth* usually end up as victims along with the unbelievers whom they have victimized. *Truth* is a product of human perception.

### It Takes One to Know One

The heritage of U.S. commercial mass-communication media dates back at least to the Greek philosopher Protagoras (485–410 B.C.). Protagoras was the most famous of the sophists, known for his dictum, “Man is the measure of all things.” Having pondered the relativity of human perceptions and judgments, Protagoras was eventually accused of heresy, his books were burned, and he died in exile.

Early Greek sophists were professional teachers of rhetoric, then considered, in the words of Aristotle, to be “*all the available means of persuasion*.” *Sophist* originally meant a “clever” or “skilled” person. Sophists were attacked by Plato and Aristotle for not seeking *objective truths*. The sophists’ only concern, according to their critics, was victory in debate—a victory they were allegedly prepared to use dishonest means to achieve. In the interest of their clients, who paid high fees, sophists supposedly attacked traditional values in Greek society. This was their fatal mistake. They are remembered today almost entirely through their critics who tell us that sophists cared only for success and power, not *truth*. Sophists sought to understand the structure of human societies, relationships between words and things, between observers and their observations, and between reality and perceptions of reality. Protagoras was widely known for his ethical and moral preoccupations. Critics, however, claimed sophist doctrines were dishonest and

blamed them for weakening Greek moral fiber. The sophists perceived no permanently enduring truth, no divinely sanctioned law, and no eternal, transcendental code of values. The sophist movement disappeared in Greek philosophy by the third century b.c., but had a powerful effect upon succeeding centuries of philosophy, science, and scholarship as an anti-thesis (something to oppose). *Sophistry* today is a term used for fallacious reasoning or argument.

Plato, though antagonistic to the sophists, accepted their view that all perceptions are relative to time, place, and the situation of the perceiver. Aristotle, however, sought to verify objective truths. Aristotelian logic has served the ruling elites of Western society for over 2,000 years. Aristotle demonstrated, through verbal syllogistic logic, the existence of truth. During the Middle Ages, Catholic scholastic philosophers adapted Aristotelian logic to justify and validate papal authority, social hierarchies, slavery, canon law, and theological doctrine, and most importantly, to verify the existence of God. Aristotelian logic became the foundation of Western religious, social, economic, legal, and philosophical reasoning. Protagoras was forgotten, his sophist perspectives ignored or treated as evil and false. Had the views of Protagoras been useful to the power elites who controlled societies over the two millenia, as useful as Aristotle's, civilization would have taken a far different course—perhaps one marked by far less bloodshed.

The sophists were the earliest known exponents of perceptual, cultural, and epistemological relativism. The measure of things, in their view, was not God or abstract, scientific, philosophical truth, but human beings, their needs, and their search for happiness. Sophistic relativism offended many as a recipe for moral anarchy, a denial of enduring truth, and a perceived threat to the power elite of the day.

Sophistry has flourished in the twentieth century under other labels, definitions, and socioeconomic rationalizations. It became far more sophisticated, and sophists learned not to talk about being sophists. They learned to affect publicly a pretense of accepting "objective reality." For sophistry to succeed in an Aristotelian world, it must not be perceived as sophistry. Thus, the modern media technician must disguise his technology under a mantle of credible truths. Media must reach the most desirable demographic

and psychographic audience characteristics on behalf of its clients. What appears credible to one stratum may appear specious to another. Appeals must sell products, ideas, and individuals regardless of actual product merit or substance.

The communication industry operates on the sophistic basis that all things are relative, that credibility and sales are the criteria of effectiveness, that truth is an adaptable, malleable, even expendable commodity. Truth, as every media employee knows, can be created, ignored, adapted to any purpose, modified, or turned upside down. Truth becomes credibility and is validated in the eyes of the beholder instead of within a rigorous structure of confirmable facts.

- ✓ This relativistic perspective, however, must never be permitted to surface consciously within the audience.

In the training of professional communication technicians, effort is made to sidestep personal conviction or commitment to a cause, perspective, ideal, or even personal preference. "Professional objectivity" is offered as an ideal that disposes, in fantasy at least, of human bias. Media technicians work for any product, brand, politician, or individual who can hire them.

U.S. media executives operate in a milieu of sophistic relativism, constantly measuring work and cost-effectiveness against sales, votes, or attitude and opinion change. Truths are manufactured to order; audience-perceived realities are manipulated to appear as objective realities. Media technicians cannot, however, develop credible illusions and fantasies accidentally. They must *know* what they are doing. They also must disguise from audiences what they are doing, or that they are doing anything beyond the superficially obvious. Audiences are never permitted backstage; illusions are easily destroyed, and media illusions are worth a great deal of money.

This book uses an almost classical sophist perspective to unmask the cynical sophistry of mass-communication media. It is unconcerned with the obvious, consciously perceived world in which humans think they live out their lives. What appears conscious, logical, and reasonable has little persuasive significance. These explorations probe influences humans do not consciously perceive—the *subliminal*. The goal is to render more of the subliminal consciously apparent.

## The Subliminal Strategies

There are six audiovisual techniques through which subliminal information can be communicated, hidden from conscious awareness, that appear frequently in ad media. Categories invariably overlap. Any single visual or audio example may include an assortment of the categories. Unexpected creative innovation may demand new, revised categorization. But the basic categories are:

1. Figure-Ground Reversals (syncretistic illusions)
2. Embedding
3. Double Entendre
4. Tachistoscopic Displays
5. Low-Intensity Light and Low-Volume Sound
6. Lighting and Background Sound

### *Figure-Ground Reversals*

Visual and auditory perceptions can be divided into *figure*—content, foreground, subject—and *ground*, background supportive to figure, the environment in which the figure occurs. Areas peripheral to figure are usually taken for granted, unnoticed, and considered irrelevant. Humans constantly, unconsciously, distinguish between figure and ground, separating the two. Conscious attention focuses upon figure, while background is subordinated, perceived unconsciously. When a threatening distraction appears in ground, ground becomes figure. To alert, perceptually sensitive individuals, probing every possible dimension of a percept for new, meaningful information, figure and ground can appear in a constant state of flux. At a low level of sensitivity, figure and ground remain rigidly fixed, static, locked-in.

The famed vase or faces explained the idea for generations in introductory psychology textbooks. Other widely known figure-ground (or syncretistic) illusions include the old woman or young woman, duck or rabbit, vanity (a beautiful woman before her mirror) or death (a skull), and the famous Rubens profiles—a series of drawings where one illusion is perceived on one side of

a line and another on the other side. Less than 1% of the adult U.S. population has syncretistic vision—the ability to perceive both sides of these illusions (figure and ground) simultaneously. Experiments suggest, however, that figure-ground is easily perceived while in a hypnotic trance. Most people appear to have a latent, unconscious potential for syncretistic vision.

For several centuries at least, artists have known that ground is as important to meaning and visual experience as figure. In many famous paintings, ground often carries the most significant information, the data necessary to make sense, significance, or meaning out of the picture. Advertising artists eventually learned that figure could be reduced to banality—a safe, uncontroversial, nonchallenging presentation of information. Ground, on the other hand, could contain the really exciting proposition, the vital data perceived unconsciously.<sup>1</sup> One simple example of visual figure-ground reversal is the cartoon painting of four plants (fig. 1).

### Blossoms in a Garden

The painting was developed by a San Francisco attorney, August Bullock. Several designs printed on the Subliminal Sex® T-shirts sold through Macy's stores in California and Georgia and through Bamberger's in New Jersey. The two plants on the left appear in intimate proximity. The left plant has wound a tendril gently around the plant on its right. Were the plants people, they would appear affectionately involved.

With a little imagination, the two flowers on the left appear to have gender—boy and girl. Flowers are important symbolic as well as biological entities—even though symbolism is rarely studied in the U.S. There are good reasons why humans, especially women, like flowers—even pictures of flowers. Flowers are the reproductive organs of the plant.<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, the third plant with the big head is separated from the two loving plants on the left—lonely, alienated, trying to make out with the plant on the far right, which has lost its flower. The above describes *figure* in the painting—obviously about the birds and the bees. A bluebird perches on a leaf at left and a bee bumbles about on the bottom right. *Ground*, on the other hand, involves

the white background. Search the white areas for information. Study the ground between each flower carefully before reading further.

Just above the grass between the two plants at left, the white ground curves upward to the right—forming the letter *S*. Once the *S* is perceived consciously, the two other letters usually appear. The *E* is formed by the ground between the second and third plants. The *X* appears between the third and fourth plants.

Similar simple figure-ground reversals are regularly utilized in advertising art. The emotional, dramatic information is in ground, available at an unconscious level of perception. The figure information, what the picture is superficially about, is banal, unthreatening, taken for granted.

The *SEX* was instantly perceived within the brain unconsciously. Perception occurs in microseconds. The portions of perception that surface consciously process much more slowly. Conscious perception, in this case, focused upon the flowers. Unconscious perception saw the word for the most powerful drive system in the human psyche.

Perception involves both conscious and unconscious inputs into the brain. The systems apparently interconnect, but can function separately. The unconscious is believed responsible for powerful basic attitude and belief systems. With a little ingenuity—and there is much ingenuity available in the pursuit of power and profit—the simple figure-ground technique is applied to sexualize everything in the society from presidents to fingernail polish. Roughly 5% of individuals tested saw the hidden *SEX* immediately.

Another example of figure-ground reversal appeared in the TV commercial for Wrigley's chewing gum. From the still, it is easy to perceive that this young man is up to no good (fig. 2). In the next scene (fig. 3), the young woman almost drops the picnic basket. After juggling it for a moment, the young man helps her keep the basket from falling. The audience focal point in the brief scene concentrates upon the basket—the *figure*, the primary action. But, in the background, the emotionally significant information appears—the man's hand reaches beneath the basket to pat the fe-

male's genitalia. In the final brand identification frame, Wrigley's advises, "Get the Little Lift!" Indeed! (fig. 4)

### Auditory Figure-Ground Reversals

Figure-ground relationships also appear in sound. Composers developed orchestration techniques over five centuries ago that could be described as subliminal. When an orchestra plays a chord, each musician holding a single component of the chord, only the aggregate is perceived by the audience. Individual instruments and their notes in the chord are not consciously differentiated. However, a one-note variation in the chord can be detected.

Traditional polyphonic composition employs four voices as full harmonic sound, though there can be more or less than four. Figure-ground, in this case, might be composed of four levels, only one of which is likely to be perceived consciously as figure at any one moment in time. Nonmusicians usually perceive only one voice, melody, or melodic harmony. Musicians often can consciously hear two voices. Some individuals can perceive three. Very few consciously perceive all four voices. The complexity of consciously perceiving all the voices, often running counter to one another, is staggering.

In a musical score, however, all the voices can be read on paper, vertically and horizontally. As they appear vertically, the notes—one above the other—are perceived simultaneously at one time interval. Horizontally, as the score progresses, you can follow as each voice pursues an independent melodic direction in time. But human hearing welds the voices into a unified time continuum. Unconsciously, the brain appears to perceive each one independently, is able to discriminate one from another. Consciously, the four-voice continuities are experienced collectively.<sup>1</sup>

### Perceptions of Genius

The young Mozart once heard a polyphonic choral composition sung by the Vatican's Sistine Chapel Choir. The complex score

had been a guarded secret of the Church for many decades. After one hearing, Mozart transcribed the complete score from memory. He was able to perceive each of the four voices separately and collectively, vertically and horizontally.

Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is arguably the most magnificent and complex single composition in Western music, and Beethoven wrote it after becoming totally deaf. He never heard the work performed. Synesthesia, which most individuals perform unconsciously, means a perception of one sense that stimulates another sense. In this case, Beethoven's auditory sense was stimulated by his visual perception of the written score. In effect, he saw how it would sound. Most individuals can demonstrate synesthesia during hypnotic trance, but Beethoven did it consciously.

This perceptual sensitivity is most often found in creative individuals, in musicians, poets, painters, sculptors, or writers. Perceptual sensitivity can, apparently, be taught only up to a modest point. But such perceptually liberating education has often been considered subversive or countercultural. Perceptual flexibility usually provides a wide range of multiple options.

Most world educational systems teach people to concentrate conscious focus only at one level of perceptual experience—a one-dimensional bias. There are strong ideological, economic, political, and even religious motives involved. Once individuals move beyond simplistic, one-dimensional perception, they become extremely difficult to control and to fit into preconceived group norms.

British psychoanalyst Anton Ehrenzweig theorized that flexible, multidimensional perception, which often appears among children under eight, might be sustained throughout life by an early introduction to abstract, nonlinear art forms in painting, music, sculpture, and literature. He believed it possible to extend the delightful perceptual flexibility of children before socialization up through maturation into adulthood, perhaps throughout life.

But, perceptual flexibility presents enormous problems of peer-group conflict in high-tech conformist cultures, such as those of the U.S., Japan, most of Europe, and the U.S.S.R. Young people are commercially managed into group identifications, values, and behaviors under the pretense of individualized preferences. Much of this consumer conditioning is engineered via popular arts and

culture, which derive from advertising and promotion. Radio, television, newspapers, magazines, popular music, clothing fashions, artifacts, recreations, and inexhaustible entertainments—are all perceived by the audience at a simplistic level. They appear honest, straightforward, direct: "What you see is what you get!" Nothing in the world is this simplistic.

Monolithic perception, of course, is an illusion created for consumers. The reality, known, researched, and manipulated by the merchandising media, is perceptually complex. Simplistic *seeing* and *getting* are perceptual constructs custom-manufactured only for overprotected, nongrowth-oriented children, highly vulnerable to manipulation, who eventually become the adult victims in a media-dominated society.

The victims can be observed as they scream and shout hysterically at rock concerts and later in life at religious revival meetings. They mindlessly absorb the ads in television, magazines, and newspapers. They endlessly shop fashions in supermarkets and department stores. They proudly defend consumption of junk foods, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and other media-hyped addictive substances. They are usually fantasy-defined by media as the "in crowd." Their reality is usually that of the losers, the used, the persuaded, the patsies, the appropriated.

### *Embedding*

The U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms—which supposedly regulates ads in these areas— included in its August 6, 1984, "New Rules and Regulations" (see Appendix) a definition of subliminal embedding. "One prevalent form of subliminal technique was described as the insertion of words or body forms (embeds) by the use of shadows or shading, or the substitution of forms and shapes generally associated with the body.... The consumer does not perceive them at a normal level of awareness, and thus is given no choice whether to accept or reject the message, as is the case with normal advertising. ATF holds that this type of advertising technique is false and deceptive, and is prohibited by law." The ruling applies only to alcoholic beverage ads—spirits, beer, and wine.

Subliminal techniques had earlier been declared by the Federal Communication Commission "contrary to the public interest because they are clearly intended to be deceptive." The Federal Trade Commission also prohibited the use of subliminal techniques (see Key, *The Clam-Plate Orgy*, pp. 132-49), as did the voluntary advertising and broadcasting industries' codes of ethics. It would appear, from all the time, money, and effort expended on subliminal persuasion by regulatory agencies, that the nation is safe from such nefarious manipulation and pollution. The rules prohibiting repressed media content, however, have been ignored. None of the regulations have ever been enforced.

Embedding, at first, appears as though an artist cleverly hid obscene or taboo images within a picture. Human perception can be considered both *total* (everything sensed transmits to the brain) and *instantaneous* (the speed of electron flow through neurons). In a visual percept, as little as  $\frac{1}{1000}$  of the total percept registered in the brain actually surfaces in consciousness. The remainder lies dormant within memory. Embeds enhance perceptual experience of the picture, intensifying responses such as EKG, EEG, GSR—heart rate, brain rhythms, and galvanic skin response. Emotion-alized, repressed information remains in the memory system for long periods, perhaps for a lifetime. In embedded pictures, nothing is actually hidden—certainly not by the artist. Once viewers learn perceptual flexibility, the embeds are readily available to consciousness. *The only thing hidden, in embedded media is what viewers or listeners hide from themselves.* Repression appears to be a compulsive process, probably initiated to protect oneself from unsettling information that would provoke anxiety.

### The Erect Emerald

The Tanqueray emerald ad (fig. 5) appeared in numerous national periodicals, including *Time* magazine. Somerset Importers of New York spent an estimated \$3-4 million to publish the ad. As with most ads, this layout was designed to be read in fractions of a second. Ads are not expected to be studied by readers. The copy is rarely read. The Tanqueray copy is similar to that in medical journal pharmaceutical ads. Printed in small type, it is

wordy, difficult to read and comprehend. Ad designers know few readers will actually read these texts—very few in this case, because to do so would require a prodigious investment of time, concentration, and eyestrain.

The copy, a complex explanation of the Tanqueray contest, was designed as a credibility device. The unread copy supplies a *raison d'être*, a logical excuse for the expensive full-page, four-color ad. The \$25,000 emerald prize makes the whole thing appear logical. Credible logic conceals from consciousness what is really going on.

The pouring gin, emerald, and glass are, of course, painted, not a photograph of the real thing. Artists must offer credible assumptions to viewers. The viewer must believe the stream of gin flows down from the top upon the emerald, then splashes into the glass, or the painting will make no sense, and nonsensical art will be rejected.

But let's suspend the law of gravity; it does not apply to painted illusions. Once you determine what the artist wants you to perceive, you can reverse or invert the artist's expectations. Instead of gin pouring down from above, think of the gin stream flowing upward to just below the letter *p* (a meaningful letter) in *pour*.

A formidable, erect, male genital has been embedded into the gin stream (fig. 31). Of course, alcoholic beverage ads never inform gullible consumers that anyone who drinks enough gin becomes incapable of such an erection. Ad fantasies aside, alcohol is probably the most powerful enemy of sex humans have yet invented. Alcoholic beverages are widely consumed to avoid sexual intimacy. Alcoholic fantasies conceal absurd, pathetic, and most destructive realities.

In addition to the erect penis, one of the screaming faces frequently embedded in alcohol ads appears in the green emerald triangle, just below the gin stream (fig. 30). The face, presumably, depicts the emotional state of another satisfied Tanqueray consumer. Below the triangle appears a lion's head, the king of beasts who for centuries has symbolized sexual endurance and power. This ad was designed for people who are convinced they think for themselves, but cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality.

Should anyone still believe there are things the ad media will not do in support of alcohol consumption—a dangerous, addictive drug responsible for numerous illnesses and deaths—the Tanqueray ad demonstrates avaricious trickery at its worst.

## Betty Crocker Is Super Moist

Super Moist cake mixes are Betty Crocker products of the General Mills Corporation of Minneapolis. The two-page "MMMMMM Moister" ad (fig. 6) appeared in national periodicals, including *Reader's Digest*, *TV Guide*, and various women's magazines. This four-color ad involved at least a \$5 million investment in publishing space. Reading time would be one or two seconds. In tests, one in eight readers paused to ponder the copy. People who read ads are like money in the bank to advertisers, but they are not really necessary. These few readers may consciously reflect upon the secondary head, "There have been moist layer cakes before. But now there's Super Moist!" The copy advises, quite factually as it turns out, that the preparation "has a special pudding in the mix to make it unbelievably moist." Unbelievably? Yes! But that comes later.

There is something dissonant about the slice of cake on the fork. Dissonance, something illogical, appears in many ads. It seems to act as a priming device for subliminal content, setting up the unconscious mentation system for a more profound message—all quite invisible to conscious perception. Look at the slice of cake. Either that slice is the size of a postage stamp or the fork is the size of a hay fork. You cannot have it both ways.

The Betty Crocker ad is a painting that probably represents over a \$30,000 investment in art production. Logically, the artist should have constructed the fork and the cake in a reasonably proportionate relationship. The dissonance was intentional. The only other conclusion suggests gross incompetence by the executives who invested all that money in a defective ad.

By this time, the reader has strained painfully over the cake mix ad, trying to find out what is hidden in the picture. Most will discover nothing exciting, only the obvious. Don't strain! Relax! Let your eyes play over the picture. Remember, nothing was really hidden by the artist. Readers hide (repress) taboo information from themselves. At some level of knowing, you already know what lies perceptually repressed in the ad.

Considerable skill was involved in painting the cake, although the artist expected that none of the tens of millions of consumers who saw the ad would consciously deal with reality. This is an

art of *concealment*, where viewers predictably conceal from conscious awareness, rather than an art of *exposition*. The contents of the ad are banal—little here of intellectual challenge at the conscious level. From what lies on the perceptual surface, it is impossible to justify the millions of dollars invested.

Notice casually, do not strain, what has been sculptured into the icing on the cake (fig. 32). Any standard anatomy text will confirm that the shape painted into the icing is an accurate tumescent female genital. "Super Moist," at the portrayed state of excitation, constitutes a normal physiological event.

Curiously, male genitalia in ads are usually directed to male audiences. Female genitalia are directed toward females. By conventional logic, it should be the other way around. But genital embedding appears to be most effective when arousing, unconsciously, powerful taboo associations. The modus operandi appeals to latent homosexuality, guilt, and fear of taboo violation. The chocolate icing on the cake makes the old ethnic stereotype of Aunt Jemima appear a tempest in a teapot. The promise of Betty Crocker is really the icing on the cake.

## Double Entendre

Double entendre, or double meaning, is frequently used in the fine art of persuasion. "The most carefully-poured Scotch in the world," by Chivas Regal (fig. 7) is a typical example. A man's hands tenderly pour Chivas into the glass—hardly subject matter to thrill the critical perceptions of affluent, well-educated readers. The ad is a composite painting, complex, expensive, and time-consuming to manufacture. The glass, ice cubes, bottle, pouring whiskey, and hands have been painted separately and assembled. Notice the discrepancy in the sizes of the hands and the bottle. Think a moment about the act of pouring whiskey from a bottle. Have you ever watched anyone pour with their hands in this position? The only thing held this way is a penis while standing before a urinal. The most tenderly poured Scotch, indeed. This Chivas ad appeared in such magazines as *Playboy*, *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Newsweek*, etc.—a multimillion-dollar corporate investment in alcohol marketing.

In another example of double entendre, where double-talk embeds within double-talk, the American Association of Advertising Agencies published a black-and-white flyer in the spring of 1986 (fig. 8). AAAA, a national propaganda lobby, had long been troubled over growing public awareness of subliminal advertising, and the ad was designed to dismiss the issue. The ad also implied support for alcoholic-beverage advertising, presently under attack by U.S. federal and state legislators, the American Medical Association, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Addiction, the National Institutes of Health, and numerous other groups. The AAAA ad copy alleged "that since 1957 people have tried to find breasts in the ice cubes." The copy continued, "if you really searched you probably could see the breasts. For that matter, you could also see Millard Fillmore, a stuffed pork chop and a 1946 Dodge. So-called subliminal advertising," the ad concluded, "simply doesn't exist. Overactive imaginations, however, most certainly do. If anyone claims to see breasts, they're in the eyes of the beholder." The subhead is particularly interesting: "ADVERTISING; ANOTHER WORD FOR FREEDOM OF CHOICE."

AAAA mailed thousands of these posters to U.S. universities in an attempt to quash concerns over subliminal advertising. Subliminal perception is validated by over 500 published scientific papers (see Dixon, *Subliminal Perception*). Researchers have affirmed the effects of subliminal stimuli upon ten measurable areas of human behavior. One of these is *purchasing behavior*, a subject well researched by the ad industry.

Careful analysis failed, as the AAAA promised, to find female breasts, Millard Fillmore, a stuffed pork chop, and a 1946 Dodge in the expensive painting. Nevertheless, a collection of grotesque faces, animals, a shark, and other bizarre imagery was discovered, some of them anamorphic (figs. 33–37), and an erect penis (fig. 38). The painted cocktail was so exhaustively embedded it easily qualifies under the U.S. Treasury Department's new ATF rulings (see Appendix), which prohibit subliminals in alcohol advertising. The original painting was, apparently, reduced from color to black-and-white, and some of the subtle details are obscured. Nevertheless, the logic is classic Madison Avenue. *Trust us! We wouldn't lie to you!*—even though that is precisely what they do for a living.

A simple photograph of ice cubes, including a cherry, could be produced for several hundred dollars. A sophisticated painting such as the AAAA ad is very expensive, and the consumer absorbs the costs—in more ways than one. Advertisers could not justify the initial investment if subliminals did not enhance sales, increasing both consumers and consumption. And, increased alcohol consumption directly parallels increased alcohol-related pathology—correlations discovered by World Health Organization research in a dozen nations.

Double entendre audio is also widespread. As with the visual examples, double meanings appear to enrich significance in virtually any symbolic stimuli. Michael Jackson's rock-music extravaganza *Thriller* reportedly sold some 22 million copies. The album spawned a number of rock videos that advertised the record album.

The "Beat It!" scenario is disarmingly simple. A group of young men (women are completely absent) enter a large room. They are aggressive, uptight, angry, looking for a fight. Two begin a knife fight, their combat crudely choreographed as a ballet. Michael Jackson bravely intercedes. They finally put away their knives and everyone then participates in a precision dance routine, Jackson leading the chorus. The lyric "Beat it!" repeats over and over. There appeared only one other recognizable line in the lyric, "No one wants to beat it!" The voices are loud, hysterical, screaming, led by the high-pitched, effeminate voice of Michael Jackson.

Roughly 300 university students were asked how many times they had listened to "Beat It!" Of the 97% who had heard the song: 28% had heard it from 1 to 25 times; 21% from 26 to 50 times; 26% from 51 to 100 times; and 25% over 100 times. The 51% of students who had heard "Beat It!" over fifty times were considered aficionados and used for further testing. If anything was significant about "Beat It!" they appeared most likely to know. On an anonymous questionnaire, half the aficionados confessed they had no idea what the title "Beat It!" meant. The remainder attempted to rationalize the title as, "the music beat or rhythm," "beat up or fight with someone," "we're beating it or them (getting away with something)," "putting it or them down (criticizing)," or "beat the system."

## Poorly Kept Secrets

For the past fifty years, "beat it" has been a euphemism for male masturbation. Not one of the aficionados (roughly one-third female and two-thirds male) mentioned sexual implications about "Beat It!" The survey was repeated several times with similar results. The students had repressed, or hidden from conscious awareness, the reality of "Beat It!" Michael Jackson's megahit portrayed young men at a group homosexual masturbation session. The group was beating it, letting loose tensions: when the choreography is viewed in slow motion, each time the dancers pass their right hands across their genital areas their hands jerk in perfect unison.

When someone does not consciously know something they should reasonably be expected to know, it is usually significant. Young people tend to be secretive about masturbation. The carefully kept secret, however, is well known to everyone.

The writer, director, choreographer, composer, photographers, musicians, and performers in "Beat It!" consciously had to know what they were doing in the costly rock-video production. They also had to predict (accurately) that audiences would not consciously deal with the group jack-off, would repress reality. Unconsciously perceived information of this taboo nature ensures a deep, meaningful emotional response, and continued memory. During the survey, once the subject of *group homosexual masturbation* became consciously perceived, the students appeared almost unanimously turned off to the recording. Many commented they felt nauseous when they thought of it.

## Tachistoscopic Displays

Patented in 1962 by Dr. Hal Becker, a Tulane University Medical School professor, the high-speed tachistoscope is a flashing projector used with a cine screen or light box to flash words and pictures at high speeds. Several researchers found  $\frac{1}{3000}$  second most effective with audiences. Although a small percentage of people

can consciously perceive tachistoscopic flashes at this speed, most people see them only subliminally.

Tachistoscopic projection is rarely used commercially. The high-speed flashes cannot be edited into film or videotape. Tachistoscopes were useful in early experiments with subliminal stimuli (see Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, pp. 22–23) and are still occasionally involved in psychiatric experiments (see Key, *The Clam-Plate Orgy*, pp. 101–2) and for ad-copy testing. Visual recognition varies at different speeds in relation to content. Conscious recognition appears slower for some content than for others. Emotional words, for example, were more resistant to conscious awareness than were neutral words (see Dixon, *Subliminal Perception*, pp. 167–69). Ad designers often use tachistoscopes to determine how far they can safely go with subliminal taboo themes.

Slower tachistoscopes have been heavily used for many years. They operate much like a camera shutter—from  $\frac{1}{10}$  to  $\frac{1}{150}$  second—with slower flashes that are consciously apparent. During World War II, tachistoscopes were used in military training for airplane, ship, tank, and weapon identification. The device is also widely used in foreign-language courses for vocabulary development.

Slow tachistoscopic cuts can be edited into film or videotape, and are extensively used in commercials and dramatic productions. They produce *quick cuts*, also called *metacontrast* or *backward masking*. Quick cuts are consciously visible but are masked by the next quick cut or attention-diverting continuity. Masked cuts are subliminal because they cannot be recalled, but their information will have a lingering effect upon audience perception, not unlike post-hypnotic suggestion.

Visually, for example, metacontrast can be used to intensify foreboding, tension, fear, or even humor and laughter. The quick cut, followed by a diversion, plants an emotional predisposition or feeling without the audience being aware of precisely why they experience that emotion. Metacontrast is frequently utilized in motion pictures, video dramas, and TV commercials. Particularly watch pharmaceutical and soft-drink commercials. Rock video has turned metacontrast manipulation into an art form.

Reaction shots, in which actors react to the speech or actions of

others, offer a host of possibilities with which to manipulate audiences. Reaction shots are rarely recalled, though they were consciously perceived. Audiences unconsciously identify with the reaction shots more strongly than with the actual speech or actions.

### *Low-Intensity Light and Low-Volume Sound*

More effective than tachistoscopic displays is low-intensity light and, its audio counterpart, low-volume sound. Several years ago, a Coca-Cola research executive explained how to make a subliminal induction device far more effective, cheaper, and more difficult to detect than a tachistoscope (see Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, p. 23). He wired a rheostat into the light cord of a slide projector. Once a slide was projected over a motion picture, light could be reduced to a level just below where the slide image was consciously apparent. Numerous experiments were also conducted at subliminal projection levels one candlepower above the ambient light in a room (see Key, *The Clam-Plate Orgy*, pp. 100–102). These early experiments were primitive compared with subliminal techniques developed later.

Very little photography is published in media without retouch work. Relax and focus visually upon a particular area of a face, scanning irregularities in skin tones, or backgrounds. After roughly ten seconds of relaxation, leisurely scan, allowing the eyes to wander in their own direction. One of the three letters *S*, *E*, or *X* will appear. When one of the letters appears, look sequentially for the other two. With a little practice at relaxed perceptual probing, anyone can soon consciously perceive dozens of *SEX*es embedded in the illustrations. These are low-intensity light embeds, the same technique used in film or video tape. Subliminal stimuli can be embedded in artwork through several techniques—engraving, air-brush retouch, or doctored film emulsions. *SEX*es can be embedded individually or in a mosaic pattern with stripped-in fine dot screens used on one or more of the color separations in film emulsion or engraved plates.

Many letter combinations convey the idea of *SEX*. Quite often, the *SEX* may not include all three letters. Abbreviations such as

*SE*, *ZX*, *XE*, *EX*, or names such as *NEXSON* or *EXXON* appear. Subliminal *SEX*, however, probably has little to do with girl-in-a-bikini *SEX*. Advertisers have indiscriminately sexualized virtually everything they publish or broadcast with subliminal *SEX*es. In the Betty Crocker “*MMMMMM Moister*” ad (fig. 6), several *SEX*es are lightly painted into the cake texture, and *SEX*es appear in the Seagram’s Crown Royal (fig. 15) painted background.

With perceptual systems constantly under bombardment, individuals may have difficulty learning relaxed perception. The experience can be frustrating, which makes it even more difficult. Human perception becomes more inhibited as physiological tensions increase. Tension increases as humans become more susceptible to subliminal persuasion. The threshold—an imaginary line that divides conscious and unconscious perception—elevates in response to tension and anxiety; it lowers, and more information becomes consciously available, as tensions decrease and individuals become more relaxed.

### If Looks Could Kill

A chilling example of subliminal embedding appeared on the April 21, 1986, cover of *Time* magazine—“Target Gaddafi” (fig. 9). Signed by an artist named Hirsch, the acrylic painting portrayed a stern, foreboding Muammar Gaddafi, described in the cover story as “Obsessed by a Ruthless, Messianic Vision.” Much of the cover story had been researched and written in anticipation of the U.S. attack on Libya, the issue appearing on newsstands throughout the world a week after the April 14th air strikes against Tripoli and Benghazi.

A magazine cover is an ad for the publication. It has one function—to sell. *Time* covers, like other periodical covers, are embedded with subliminal information, readily perceivable to anyone familiar with the techniques. Every so often, however, merchandising zeal overwhelms discretion.

Just above Gaddafi’s left eye (fig. 39) appears an obvious, clearly defined, large *X*. Starting under the right eyebrow next to the nose, the *S* extends upward across the forehead almost to the hairline. The *S* is interrupted by the white, overprinted *I* in *Gaddafi*.

The letter *E* appears obscure at first, but can be perceived after a few seconds of relaxed viewing. The horizontal bottom line of the *E* blends into the top right edge of the left eyebrow. In addition, numerous small *SEX*es appear embedded throughout.

### Whose *SEX* Is Largest?

The *Time* cover portrait of the Ayatollah Khomeini on the November 26, 1979 issue, during the Iranian hostage crisis, was similarly embedded. A large *SEX* was lightly airbrushed across the forehead of the Iranian leader's portrait. The cover included a small inset photograph of then President Jimmy Carter. Numerous small *SEX* embeds very lightly appeared across Carter's face. The acrylic painting portrayed Khomeini as dark, powerful, and threatening. By comparison, Carter's expression is grim, tight-lipped, and defensive. Strong lighting on Carter's photo made him appear pale, even sickly. It is safe to assume the Khomeini *Time* cover sold well, especially among those readers convinced Carter was a passive blunderer. The Ayatollah Khomeini's *SEX* was much larger, far more formidable than the smaller, unimposing *SEX*es of the president.

The Gaddafi cover went beyond the simplistic subliminal comparison of one leader's *SEX* against the other's. The word *KILL*, in large capital letters, was embedded across Gaddafi's right cheek. Once consciously perceived, the four-letter word stands out like the fabled sore thumb.

Subliminal embedding initiates extremely subtle, powerful effects. Norman Dixon, the British experimental psychologist, commented, "It may be impossible to resist instructions which are not consciously experienced." Several students who had not read the Gaddafi cover issue were individually hypnotized by this author. Each was shown the cover and asked to carefully examine the portrait details before they were hypnotized. Under hypnosis, subjects are perceptually very sensitive. In the trance, they were asked to open their eyes and again study the portrait. The students were then awakened and asked, "What is Gaddafi thinking about?" They each replied without hesitation, "Kill!" One student first said "Revenge!"; her second choice was "Kill!" She reported that

"Kill" had actually been her first choice but that she rejected it as too farfetched and overdramatic.

In October 1986, six months after the April attack on Libya, *Washington Post* journalist Bob Woodward obtained a copy of a seven-page memorandum from the U.S. Department of State's Office of Intelligence and Research. The classified memo proposed that "a sequenced chain of real and illusory events might generate enough pressure to make Gaddafi believe his aides disloyal, that there was strong opposition to him internally in Libya, and that U.S. forces were about to launch another attack upon Libya (see Woodward, *Veil*, pp. 471-77). The plan was to provoke Gaddafi into actions that might cause his assassination.

The disinformation campaign against Gaddafi was supported by CIA Director William J. Casey, Vincent M. Cannistraro, a veteran CIA operations officer and director of intelligence on the NSC staff, Howard R. Teicher, director of the Office of Political-Military Affairs in the NSC, and White House National Security Affairs Adviser John M. Poindexter, later fired by President Reagan for his lies and misconduct in the Iran-Contra affair. Senior representatives from the CIA, State Department, and White House had endorsed the plan on August 7 at 4:30 p.m. in a White House Situation Room meeting.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz first admitted, then later denied, that he approved of putting out misleading information to confuse Gaddafi and the U.S. public. Other Reagan administration officials averred that the disinformation campaign was intended only to mislead foreign journalists, not Americans. Nevertheless, for two months U.S. news publications widely published and broadcast the fake stories, which quoted unnamed administration sources asserting Libya and the U.S. were again on a "collision course," elaborated upon the instability of Gaddafi's regime, and claimed the U.S. planned joint action with France to expel Libyan forces from Chad. When the State Department memo surfaced in early October, President Reagan strongly denied such a plan was approved. "We are not telling lies," he said, "or doing any of these disinformation things we were cited with doing." The president's casual honesty and direct eye contact reiterated, *Trust me, I wouldn't lie to you!*

Whether *Time*'s April cover stemmed simply from the desire

for increased circulation and ad revenue or from cooperation with the government is irrelevant. The cover's effect was to increase the emotional support of *Time*'s readers (some 25 million) for the attack upon Libya. Specific factual justifications for the military action were promised by Reagan, but never released. As justification for the attack on Libya, U.S. administration spokesmen named Gaddafi instigator of an April 5th discotheque bombing in West Berlin in which a U.S. serviceman was killed and numerous others injured. Months later, the discotheque bombing was attributed to a Syrian-based terrorist group. Once sufficient hysteria was generated, virtually any military act appeared justified. But then, the U.S. population has been taught to think it thinks for itself.

In the United States, news information is sold, merchandised, and manipulated in support of commercial and corporate interests. The validity of such public information should have been questioned long ago. Legislative committees could subpoena the artist and editorial executives who manufactured, supervised, purchased, and published the Gaddafi cover if they wished to know more about media manipulations of public opinion.

Dr. Hal Becker, who patented the high-speed tachistoscope, manufactures and sells audio processors that insert subliminal messages into music sound tracks. His Mark III-B Programmable Subliminal Audio Processor monitors and rectifies the changing volume of the consciously audible signal. Through an electronic analog multiplier, the rectified audible signal controls the subliminal input's low-volume level. Audible and subliminal signals are then mixed. Dr. Becker explained that the subliminal input so closely parallels the volume changes in the audible music that it would be impossible to prove the message contained subliminal information.

Similarly, Becker's Mark III Video Subliminal Processor inserts videotaped subliminal imagery into a standard video microwave signal. The subliminal video is set at a candlepower level slightly above the consciously apparent picture. Subliminal input may be words, phrases, silhouettes, half-tone black-and-white or color pictures, or combinations of all of them. This author observed the video processor in Becker's laboratory. It was ingenious. Dr. Becker inserted a videotape with subliminals into regular video trans-

missions going into his receiver. He could elevate the subliminal picture so it could be consciously perceived, then fade it down into the lights, shadows, and color blends and separations of the standard broadcast signal.

While watching the demonstration, I was troubled by unsettling thoughts about how easily the U.S. could insert such material via satellite into Soviet network TV. And, in turn, how the Soviets could subliminally hype U.S. TV, perhaps injecting lively thoughts into the banality of situation comedies or talk shows.

Becker sells his audio processor for subliminal antitheft indoctrination in supermarkets and department stores. The system reduced theft roughly 40% in one large supermarket chain, which also experienced a related 60% reduction in annual employee turnover. Becker successfully reduced workman's compensation claims via subliminal safety indoctrination. His antitheft program significantly reduced in-store arrests. After eight months, one store manager reported a complete turnaround in cashier shortages, staff turnovers, and negative employee attitudes, and was able to reduce stock handlers by 50% while maintaining the same level of efficiency. Cashier shortages dropped from an average \$125 weekly to less than \$10. Customer complaints about cashiers virtually disappeared. Merchandise damaged by stock handlers was down one-third. Pilferage dropped from \$50,000 every six months to less than \$13,000. In another supermarket chain, employee turnover dropped one-half during eleven months.

Becker also designs subliminal programs for physician and hospital waiting rooms. They reduced patient steam-ups (60% in one study), fainting from needle insertions (to nearly zero), and smoking (by 50% to 70%). He successfully operated a weight-control clinic in New Orleans for over a decade, in which subliminally embedded videotapes reinforced a rigorous diet program. The program, recognized by the New Orleans Medical Association, received most patients through physician referral. Becker emphasized he has not used subliminal technology in advertising, politics, or religion. His equipment is available only to qualified professionals through restrictive-use covenants. Becker believes subliminal indoctrination could reduce motor vehicle accidents, crime, and substance abuse, with great potential in therapy, education, and training. Not everyone, however, is convinced.

Becker appears genuinely concerned about the ethics of subliminal persuasion. But there is a paradox involved. If you tell someone they will be exposed to subliminals, the effectiveness is impaired. If you do not tell them, you may have violated legal and ethical rights under the Constitution (see Goodkin and Phillips). The discussion of ethics may be academic, since the advertising industry has intensively indoctrinated consumers subliminally for over half a century. Ad violations have consistently been ignored by the federal government; perhaps worse, the population has passively permitted the subliminal indoctrination to continue. As the *Christian Science Monitor* has said of Becker's inventions, "The real threat in a free society is that such attempts at thought control—or behavioral modification, as its promoters call it—would be tolerated at all. . . . This technique is an invasion of thinking. It could easily be put to political or oppressive purposes."

### Security Through Subliminals

Another entrepreneur who has developed behavior modification systems is David Tyler, president of Proactive Systems of Portland, Oregon. Tyler's subliminal tapes adjust low-volume sound levels to changes in room noise levels. Proactive Systems, Inc., is primarily involved in theft-prevention. Tyler perceives himself as a social benefactor, preventing customers from being arrested for theft, employees from being entrapped and fired, and store owners from losing the present five cents of every retail dollar to theft. Tyler even envisions lower prices after subliminal indoctrination makes everyone honest—a worthy, though unlikely, goal. Like McDonald's, "He Does It All for Us!"

Proactive Systems, Inc., has also developed subliminal indoctrination for self-esteem enhancement, pain management in cardiac recovery rooms after open-heart surgery, stress management in stockbrokerage firms and a chemical company, and a tranquilizing program for a children's hyperactivity clinic. Proactive claims their installations, most on the West Coast, produce an average reduction in theft of 50% in department, clothing, grocery, and drug stores. Dr. Becker estimated in 1984 that there were probably around 300

such store installations in the U.S. Tyler insists he requires full public disclosure from clients, except in theft prevention.<sup>18</sup>

Another entrepreneurial scheme to exploit subliminal persuasion technology was developed by Stimutech, Inc., of East Lansing, Michigan. Their marketing executives discovered millions of home computers were stored in attics and garages. The computers had been heavily merchandised, possibly with subliminals, and millions of families had invested in them, convinced that they were indispensable to an up-to-date household. After a few months of steadily decreasing use, most families discovered what the merchandisers had known from the beginning: home computers are expensive and, except as toys, useless in the home. After the media-hyped initial enthusiasm waned, home computers ended up in storage (they were too expensive to discard). Their owners made up one of the most ideal markets conceivable. By the time they had stored their computers in the garage for a year, they felt stupid, embarrassed, and defensive, receptive to any new product that would vindicate the investment.

Stimutech's Expando-Vision is a computer-video system that flashes subliminal messages to the subconscious. Only a small investment (\$89.95 for an Electronic Interface Device) connects the idle computer to a TV set; the computer then controls the light and speed intensity of the inserted messages, holding them at subliminal levels. Subliminal videotapes are inserted into the E.I.D. Stimutech began its marketing program with eight videotapes: weight control/exercise, smoking control/calm nerves, stress control/positive thinking, drinking control/responsibility, athletic confidence/golf, study habits/memory power, career/success motivation, and, the ultimate tape for males besieged by ERA and the masturbatory manipulations of men's magazines, sexual confidence.

*Expando-Vision*, like other simple answers to complicated questions, will probably work on *some* people, *sometimes*, under *some* conditions. The variable *some* is, of course, unknowable and extremely complex. *Expando-Vision*, apparently, worked profitably for the promoters. Beyond that lies enormous uncertainty. Some people quit smoking and, in an unconscious search for a replacement addiction, end up alcoholics or compulsive eaters.<sup>19</sup> To achieve significant change in compulsive behaviors, physicians or

licensed psychologists should be consulted, perhaps those skilled in clinical hypnosis. The objective of most therapy is to increase an individual's will power, autonomy, and sense of responsibility, not to provide an electronic crutch that may conceal critical symptoms.

Anorexia nervosa and bulimia are severe, often fatal eating disorders. They involve perceptual reality distortions. Individuals perceive themselves obese, even when they approach death by self-starvation. These are among the illnesses where media hype, subliminal ad indoctrination, and cultural manipulations about the desirability of thin bodies appear as powerful causative factors. Should an anorexia nervosa patient acquire a subliminally embedded weight-reduction tape, the result could be terminal.

### Something to Sell

Both Becker and Tyler testified during a House Committee on Science and Technology hearing chaired by Rep. Dan Glickman that they did not believe subliminals could be effectively utilized in advertising—in direct contradiction to the wide range of applications they cited for their commercial gadgetry. Though this author's writings were referred to abundantly in written submissions to the committee, the use of subliminal technology in ads and commercial media was ignored during the seven hours of testimony.

Becker and Tyler diligently rationalized their use of subliminal stimuli. Becker claimed there has been no proven case of significant harm to anyone from subliminals. Dr. Charles Kamp of the Federal Communications Commission testified there is doubt among scientists that subliminal techniques are effective. He further emphasized that the FCC had not received a complaint for years. From 1966, he added, complaints about subliminals were no more than one-half of 1% of all complaints. Becker, curiously, reported he was not at liberty to discuss Defense Department research on subliminal persuasion.

Dr. Howard Shevrin, a University of Michigan Medical School psychologist, cited the work of Soviet experimenters who have developed a reliable lie-detection technique utilizing subliminal

EEG response within milliseconds of an exposure to stimuli (see Kostandov and Arzumanov). New York University psychologist Dr. Lloyd Silverman testified in considerable detail about successful therapeutic experiments with subliminal stimuli. Both Shevrin and Silverman are highly respected medical experimenters who have worked with subliminal phenomena over the past twenty-five years. They told the committee they would oppose as potentially dangerous the commercial applications offered by Becker and Tyler. Neither Shevrin nor Silverman mentioned ad-media applications of subliminal technology. Shevrin, however, compared the social consequences of subliminal persuasion to the discovery of nuclear weapons.

Congressman Glickman repeatedly asked about subliminals in advertising. The question was denied or sidestepped by each witness. Glickman finally concluded, "It [subliminal persuasion] is obviously not in widespread use today in commercial sectors of our economy, according to the testimony we have heard" (U.S. House of Representatives, p. 134).

The hearing was an interesting exercise in how to simultaneously investigate and not investigate an issue. It would be intriguing to know if agreements were made as to what would and would not be discussed. The omission of advertising was far too complete to be convincingly accidental.

### *Lighting and Background Sound*

Two essential film and video production elements not consciously perceived by audiences are lighting and sound backgrounds. Both are carefully structured to engineer response to action and dialogue. Both are usually supportive or reinforcing to the consciously perceived material in a scene. Whenever lighting or sound backgrounds intrude into conscious awareness, they become distractions and detract from the collective perception.

Film or video sound without background sound or music seems emotionally flat and painfully slow-paced. Even on locations, it is usually difficult to obtain the precise background sound mix appropriate to a particular scene. Sound must be manufactured to order. Background sound is usually assembled in layers. Generic

street sound may involve an aggregate of indistinct peripheral conversations, children playing, auto-bus-streetcar traffic, bird chirpings, distant thunder, footsteps, wind, distant sounds such as ships, foghorn, and police, fire, or ambulance sirens. These sound layers are usually recorded separately and mixed. A wide variety of sound dimensions—intensities, speeds, interrelationships, and tonal qualities—can be manufactured to fit a scene. The layers are mixed to a precise illusion of reality, or more correctly, audience expectations of reality. If well constructed, the illusion is more emotionally satisfying than would be the actual reality, but remains subliminal throughout.

Once the background sound mix is created for a scene, music may be integrated for dramatic emphasis, suspense, or emotional audience priming for a developing action. Silences are also a dimension of sound. There are dozens of distinct electronic silences, each producing a definable audience response. Sounds and silences can be alternated for an extensive array of audience effects. None of this, if well constructed, will ever be consciously considered by audiences.

Lighting in film or video is another of the powerful subliminal effects constructed into the media illusion of reality. As with sound, the audience remains unaware that lighting has been constructed. Maris Janson shared an Oscar for his work in lighting the movie *Chariots of Fire*. It was a difficult job because much of the film was shot outdoors. Natural lighting is rarely consistent, not to mention rarely exactly what scenes require. Janson controlled audience mood, emotion, tension, tranquillity, and anxiety with lighting technology he described as subliminal. The most difficult problem, he explained, was to prevent the lighting from intruding on audience awareness, which would ruin its effect. Janson modified audience-perceived meanings, significance, and emotional reactions through subtle lighting changes; for example, a consciously unnoticed shadow crossing an actor's face can prime the audience to expect a dramatic interlude.

Shadow lengths and subtle shadings of light and dark unconsciously manage emotional intensities. They can establish time order in a scene, or create feelings about a character who is lit differently than others. Backgrounds are lit unevenly to intensify

depth illusions or action sequences. Every minute portion of a scene, as recorded on camera, is carefully studied for appropriate lighting. Foreground and background lighting can be integrated with backlighting and key lighting for a variety of effects.

Lighting, like sound, is constructed to provide audiences with credible illusions. If well engineered, the fantasy of reality appears far more real than actual reality. Fantasy (engineered perception) becomes more attractive, desirable, emotionally engaging, and meaningful than reality (unmanipulated perception).

The black-and-white, light and shadow, "Body by Soloflex" ads (figs. 10, 11, and 12) recently appeared as a series in a variety of national periodicals such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *GQ*. Market research discovered that in the New York male homosexual community, the ads became poster icons. They were framed and prominently displayed in apartments. Apparently, Soloflex focused their ad campaign upon men with strong latent homosexual tendencies. As the overt male homosexual community is believed to be less than 10% of the population, the expensive ads could not have been justified if directed only at this limited audience.

In the first ad (fig. 10), a young man takes off his undershirt. Half the model's face is in shadow, suggesting something about him is hidden. A rather ominous shadow, just left of the model's navel, emanates from above the top of his designer jeans, in the shape of a large, erect male genital. The shadow has been airbrushed into the artwork. What male could resist the promise of Soloflex?

The second ad (fig. 11) shows another young model standing with his left thumb hooked in a pocket. The thumb is often used as a phallic symbol in art, in this case passive and waiting. His eyes are hidden from the viewer by sunglasses. In Western cultures, hidden eyes usually imply hidden thoughts. On this model's abdomen, growing out of his trousers just above the belt buckle, appear two large erect genitals, deftly airbrushed into the photograph. Apparently, after six months of Soloflex, men are promised two prodigious penises. The promise of Soloflex appears unlimited, especially for sexually harassed American males who can never live up to media's expectations.

"No Pain, No Gain," is the copy line for the third Soloflex ad

(fig. 12). A young man sits on an exercise bench in shorts, legs widely spread to expose the genital area. The model's left shoulder is strangely discolored, as though burn-scarred, disfigured. Similarly, airbrushed in, in the shoulder just above the armpit, is a slit (fig. 40). The shoulder, viewed out of context, looks like the buttocks and anal opening, adding new significance to "No Pain, No Gain." Soloflex has utilized similar sex-role ambiguities in their TV advertising.

## 2 | HOW TO GET INSIDE THE OPEN MIND — UNDETECTED

Nothing can be brought to an end in the unconscious.  
Nothing is past or forgotten.

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*

If you do not specify and confront real issues, what you say will surely obscure them. If you do not alarm anyone morally, you yourself remain morally asleep. If you do not embody controversy, what you say will be an acceptance of the drift of the coming human hell.

C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*

Hypocrisy which takes the form of a denial of hypocrisy is *hypocrisy squared*.

Lionel Rubinoff, *The Pornography of Power*

The effects of subliminal stimuli have been verified on at least ten measurable areas of human behavior. British psychologist Norman Dixon, in evaluations of over 500 scientific studies, concluded, "behavior can be determined by external events over which we can affect no [conscious] control" (Dixon, *Subliminal Perception*, p. 322). The ten areas of behavior are:

1. Dreams
2. Memory
3. Conscious Perception
4. Emotional Response
5. Drive-Related Behavior
6. Perceptual Threshold
7. Verbal Behavior
8. Adaptation Levels or Judgmental Values
9. Purchasing Behavior
10. Psychopathology

Validating studies published over the past sixty years on these ten measurable effects were summarized in my three earlier books. Avoiding a review of this basic information, this chapter only updates current developments.

In the cultural grip of media, modern societies blindly stumble from one crisis or disaster to another with the fantasized conviction that they know *what* they are doing, *where* they are going, *how* they will survive, *who* is in control, and *why* everything works or does not work as it should. These unconsciously reinforced fantasies actually threaten survival.

The list of subliminal effects powerfully demonstrates that humans can be programmed into almost any group perceptual construction or cultural perspective (synonymous concepts) by those who control media. Group behavior is measurable and believed predictable in terms of statistical probabilities. Media provide the system through which economic markets are controlled. Not everyone in any given culture is controllable. Humans become most vulnerable when the battle of beliefs supports basic cultural indoctrinations. Limiting factors at present are motivation, time, and money—not technology. Highly developed technologies of human engineering, propaganda, and mind control have been available

for many years. Technological refinements and innovations continue to proliferate.

Population segments most susceptible to media management usually think they think independently, critically, clearly, and can readily discriminate between truth and falsity, reality and fantasy. The self-perception of autonomy is a basic indoctrinational priming tool. Humans who think they think for themselves often do not. The better primed by cultural values, the more vulnerable to manipulation.

### Bucking the System

There will be dissidents, disbelievers, deviants, heretics, subversives, and critics who struggle against mainstream conditioning for a variety of reasons. They are very important to the survival and growth of any cultural system. Deviant minorities may try to understand the mechanisms of perceptual construction and attempt to change the system. They may even openly oppose primary cultural systems. Like the sophists, however, they will eventually be discredited by the majority and its power elite.

Perception, not the labels used to describe the nonverbal perceptual process, cannot be divided into simplistic categories such as conscious (cognitive) and unconscious (subliminal). Conscious-unconscious must be viewed on a scale of more-or-less, rather than either-or. Perception, as it affects the brain and body, is totally integrated. All portions of the brain interconnect with all parts of the body. Body and mind are inextricable. A physical condition influences perception and vice versa. Perception (information flow from the senses into the brain) can be described as instantaneous and total. No one, however, knows how the brain functions; this knowledge may, indeed, be unknowable. There are only theories—hundreds of them. Theories are not truths. They must be useful only in some context to justify their existence.

Logic, reason, feelings, and conscious and unconscious motives flow in an endless stream both from memory and from the sensory inputs. The brain also manufactures or conditions perceptions independently of perceived realities. Conscious awareness appears a minute fragment of what is available in the memory. Sensory bias

consciously shifts from one experience to another, one perception to another. Were this focus—consciousness or cognitive awareness—not possible, countless perceptual distractions would cause confusion and overwhelm attention.

The *subliminal*, the *unconscious*, or whatever anyone wishes to call it, appears to function as a culture machine. It is the repository of more-or-less basic, enduring belief and attitude systems, cultural values, predispositions, and basic assumptions. By comparison, *opinions* are consciously available, transitory, and superficial. Programmed from infancy with basic assumptions, unconsciously supported ideas are usually taken for granted. When assumptions surface, they should always be questioned. Unfortunately, formal education in most cultural systems concentrates on acceptance (fitting in with the majority's basic assumptions rather than questioning them). Few ever achieved the Ph.D. by questioning the system that grants Ph.D.s.

Instinctual or inherited predispositions for certain behaviors also appear to underly human relationships. These predispositions integrate invisibly into culture-language systems. Innate behaviors in humans often surface in unconscious, basic assumptions and biases. Nobel Laureate Konrad Lorenz (*Civilized Man's Eight Deadly Sins*, pp. 76–78) included among inherited behaviors the *sense of justice* (genetically anchored reactions against asocial behaviors), *morality* (mechanisms that inhibit species nonsurvival behaviors), and *altruism* (willingness to self-sacrifice on behalf of family or society).

To this list, Harvard sociobiologist Edward Wilson (see Wilson, p. 552) adds male dominance systems, scaling of responses in aggressive interactions, prolonged maternal care with socialization of the young, and matrilineal family organization. Several genetically acquired traits unique to humans include complex language, elaborate cultures, sexual activity continuous through menstrual cycles, formalized incest taboos, marriage exchange rules with recognition of kinship networks, and cooperative labor division between males and females. Wilson concluded that such inherited traits as a *sense of justice*, *morality*, and *altruism* can disappear from populations in as few as ten generations, only two or three centuries.

Conditioning of the human unconscious through available technology can, over a relatively brief period, reorganize, change, or

diminish inherited predispositions. Such changes were observable in the total propaganda environment of Nazi Germany with comparatively primitive technology. The tragic Iks, a mountain tribe of central Uganda, within a few generations lost all traces of humanistic values. They presently border on extinction through self-indulgence, greed, and indifference to human suffering. The Icien evolution appeared owing to natural disasters coupled with inept and corrupt governmental policies and the tribe's increasing isolation (see Turnbull). The technology is available to make of the world's peoples anything desirable—the proverbial Utopia or a human garbage can filled with the refuse caused by self-indulgence, insatiable greed, and an unquenchable thirst for material acquisitions. It should be apparent that modern societies, pursuing mindless exploitation of human and natural resources, actually ensure their demise, perhaps even eventual extinction.

### Dreams

Research originating with the 1917 findings of Viennese neurosurgeon Otto Poetzel shows that subliminally induced information appears in dreams. Dreams had long been considered products of the unconscious. Conveyed by hypnosis and tachistoscopes (high-speed light projectors), subliminal content was later recovered from dreams, often in symbolic form. A penis appeared in subsequent dreams as a banana, asparagus was modified into a symbolic green tie pin. Dreams thus provide an insight into how the brain transforms unconsciously perceived data into symbols, often to camouflage taboo ideas.

Researchers estimate that the eyes alone make some 100,000 fixations daily. Only a small fragment of these fixations are consciously experienced, but most appear to register in the brain, presumably retained at some level of memory. Dream content, during rapid-eye-movement (REM) dreams in deep sleep periods, appears solely to comprise subliminal perceptions. Poetzel called the process his *Law of Exclusion*: consciously acquired stimuli excluded from dreams.

Emotional significance appears to be the basic criterion for repression or exclusion from conscious awareness. Individuals with

rigid, moralistic, religious perspectives, for example, appear especially vulnerable to the obscene subliminal embeds used by advertisers (see Dixon, *Subliminal Perception*, p. 168). Such individuals often appear highly repressed, with perceptual defenses tightly in control of daily experience. Few groups in the U.S. population appear so preoccupied with sexual or death taboos, for example, as religious fundamentalists—a fact of life regularly exploited by TV evangelists and other assorted hucksters.

Anyone who can relax via autohypnosis, meditation, or even through deep breathing, can learn consciously to discover subliminal content. In commercial uses of subliminals, however, the object is to prevent discovery. Readers are not supposed to discover genitalia in ad ice cubes. So tension is media-induced in numerous ways—data overload makes it difficult to focus upon any one portion of the perceptual experience, tension is intensified prior to commercial breaks on radio and television, and bad news (riots, wars, famines, violence, or scandals) is positioned adjacent to good news (advertising) in newspapers and magazines. Rock music is an intriguing example of engineered repression, with tension induced by high volume, hysterical, screaming performers, and visual spectacles. Very few fans understand the lyric content, which is perceived directly at the unconscious level.

Poetzle's early dream research with posthypnotic suggestions also demonstrated a time-delay mechanism in the human mentation process. Curiously, it is rare to find a U.S. psychologist familiar with the Poetzle research. Poetzle is a frequent subject of discussion, however, among ad researchers. Subliminal perceptions appear to trigger behavior, after a time period, when exposed to a related secondary conscious perception. For example, a day, week, or month after momentarily perceiving the Oscar Mayer sliced meat ad (fig. 13), conscious perception of the Oscar Mayer package in a supermarket could trigger the conscious thought that these meats are healthy and powerful. A purchase decision would be made without conscious awareness of the taboo hidden symbolism in the ad perceived earlier.

Poetzle's theorization attempted generally to describe a complex process within the human brain. Advertiser concerns, of course, focus simply upon sales effectiveness. The ability of subliminal stimuli to provoke delayed-action behavior, similar to posthypnotic

suggestion, appears well documented in experimental literature (see Hilgard; Kroger and Fezler; and Dixon, *Subliminal Perception*), and verifiable in advertising and marketing studies of comparative ad effectiveness. All the ads included as illustrations in this book were million-dollar ads—single displays for which at least a million dollars was invested, often much more. These ads were successful. They sold enough product to justify sizable investments of corporate capital.

### *Memory*

One of the most dramatic effects of subliminal stimuli upon behavior involves memory. Once subliminal embeds are perceived unconsciously, it appears impossible to forget them. Memory is generally believed to involve at least two general storage areas—conscious and unconscious. Numerous theories include a third stage—the preconscious. Other theories conceive separate memory systems for emotional and nonemotional information, or short- and long-term memory systems. Recent research has focused upon the right and left brain hemispheres' specialized memory functions. The major difficulty in memory studies is the brain's complexity—and, of course, the inevitable paradox of attempting to study a system from within the system under study. There appears a limit to the degree of understanding achievable about the human brain and language systems.

In any respect, current research into memory has barely scratched the surface. Memory involves hormonal, electrical, and chemical processes, interrelationships that function concurrently at microsecond speeds, through billions of microscopic neuron systems. The senses, around forty depending upon classifications and definitions, continuously input information into the brain. Hot and cold, for example, transmit through separate neuron systems. What humans are consciously aware of at any given instant, as conscious perceptual bias shifts from one sensory input system to another, is a tiny fragment of the totality of information available. Some of this massive input is probably dumped from the system as irrelevant, while other portions are retained for varying periods, some conceivably throughout a lifetime.

The very limited portion of memory of which humans are consciously aware as they speak, think, or write appears to function with time delays between preconscious memory storage and conscious communication. The voice, for example, pronounces words five to seven words after their apparent selection within the brain. Prior to speech, memory appears to sort, select, comparatively evaluate meaning, organize syntax and pronunciation—an unperceivable complexity of concurrent, high-speed functions. This has been called the *abstracting process*.

According to the industry house organ *Advertising Age*, the average North American perceives some 1,000 ads daily. A majority of these contain subliminal stimuli of one type or another. McCann-Erickson, one of the world's largest ad agencies, estimated total U.S. ad investments during 1986 at \$101.9 billion, and annually increasing about 15%. That means over \$155 billion in 1989. All of this is ultimately added to the price of advertised products, of course, and paid for by consumers. Residual effects of this massive brain conditioning are prodigious.

On the surface, ads appear innocent, harmless, even insipid. They are engineered to communicate this perception. Ads are not innocent, however. The unconscious memory possesses enormous storage capacity. Students who participated in my subliminal advertising research over the past fifteen years discovered surprising memory abilities. After a decade, they often recalled not only specific ads they had studied (quite an accomplishment when you consider the 1,000 ads that pass into perception daily), but also how the ads were studied, the embedded content discovered, and an array of associated detail such as the names of other individuals involved, clothing worn, lunches, and other peripheral events.

### *Conscious Perception*

Conscious memory and perception appears limited largely by what individuals or groups attempt to perceptually avoid, defend themselves against, repress, deny—what is excluded from conscious, immediate awareness. This often appears the opposite of what logic might lead you to believe. Very little perceptual experience is what it appears to be. Overt censorship, either actual

or symbolic, such as book-burning, is the best publicity a book or an author can ever hope to achieve. A prominent position on the Catholic *List of Prohibited Books* virtually ensures successful sales. Basic promotional strategies in the merchandising of obscene, drugpushing rock music involve attempts to provoke suppression or censorship by moralists, outraged parents, or government bureaucrats. The music industry exploits moral opposition very profitably. Similarly, the more authority figures oppose drug use, the more widespread addiction becomes. President Reagan's antidrug program was designed to reach the nondrug-using population, not individuals actually involved or with a high probability of involvement. Drug-oriented high school students made jokes about the simplistic, trite, "Just Say No!" The campaign had been designed for reasons other than a meaningful attempt to deter drug consumption.

This author was intrigued to discover his three earlier books listed as contraband in both the U.S.S.R. and the People's Republic of China. The books, of course, are readily available in both countries via clandestine sources. Show-business personalities such as Jim Bakker, Pat Robertson, Jimmy Swaggart, and Jerry Falwell promote themselves to their massive audiences—who already agree with them—by attacks upon sin and disbelievers. They change nothing, except possibly their financial positions. Indeed, they ensure continued popularity for virtually anything they attack with stormy right-wing diatribes. Threats of eternal damnation mean little to those under attack; perhaps they even provide incentives to persist in what they are doing. This, of course, provides an inexhaustible resource for continued attacks against sin. The asserted belief in God is virtually meaningless without constant threats from the devil. Fund-raising abilities would collapse if stated objectives were accomplished. The evangelists' failure to change the world is actually the basis for continued financial success. It helps to know the real name of the game.

### *Emotional Response*

In other words, what is not said is often far more important to a comprehension of perceivable reality than what is said. Strongly affirmative positions conceal the variety of alternate options that

underlie fixed stated positions. For example, public declarations of religious faith, born-again revelations, and confessions of sin, wrongdoing, and repentance have nothing whatsoever to do with God, Christianity, daily life behaviors within society, or altruistic deeds. Such declarations are public posturing of self-righteousness, virtue, and the elevation of self above others who have not yet seen the light. Similarly, public declarations of zealous anticommunism do not fight communism. They are merely public display of what some audiences will perceive as patriotism, virtue, honesty, and goodness. If the communist menace suddenly disappeared, many U.S. politicians would become unemployable. They would have to quickly come up with a new menace. Such posturing changes little in the real world. Moralistic rhetoric, however, often contributes to successful strategy in the struggle for power and profit. Portions of the U.S. population appear peculiarly vulnerable to such stagecrafted entertainments.

Subliminal embedding can make celebrities, models, automobiles, food products, or any other merchandisable object more attractive, exciting, desirable, flavorful, and appealing. Modern media usually avoid confronting the audience with factual realities at the level of conscious perception. Fantasies are far more involving than unembellished perceptions. Reality is often perceived as boring, to be avoided as much as possible. Superficial, passive banalities in ads have been constructed purposely. Specific, factual information invites critical audience response—a threat to sales effectiveness. Blandness, or the appearance of blandness, is usually best for competitive products such as Betty Crocker cake mix (fig. 6).

News information should be equally suspect. Merchandised news media in the U.S. is accepted at face value. The "Target Gaddafi" *Time* cover (fig. 9), with the *SEX* and *KILL* embeds, made the issue—and the fantasy of Gaddafi—more exciting and emotionally significant. Simply expressed, what is consciously perceived by individuals, groups, or even nations often has little or nothing to do with the physical, biological, and social realities the perceptions represent.

There is nothing hidden in any of the illustrations in this book. The embeds are easily perceived by anyone who has learned to manage their perceptual defenses. The hiding (i.e., *perceptual de-*

*sense*) is accomplished by viewers who hide salacious information from themselves. This is a difficult, unsettling idea. The fantasy of free will is a basic myth in democratic ideology. Numerous psychologists, notably the behaviorists, rejected the notion of perceptual defense completely until it was substantiated by the discovery of embedded art.

From inside cultural fantasies perceptually constructed by mass-communication media, both leaders and followers dangerously toy with delusions that they are in control and know precisely what they are doing. Little in human affairs is controlled, or for that matter controllable, except possibly the delusion of being in control. These involve murderous fantasies of national power, military superiority, moral righteousness, and ethnic or cultural omniscience. These notions are foolish and inherently false, usually propelled by greed disguised as patriotism, or political or religious conviction. These fantasies compare with the fantasies of virility that camouflage the sexual uncertainties and castration fears of *Playboy* magazine's troubled, immature readers. The playboy turns out to be a frightened, lonely, pathetic little boy, playing with himself.

Subliminal persuasion appears most effective on subjects in whom no prior, strong, well-structured opposition exists, when confrontation with well-established habits or ingrained ideological beliefs is avoided. However, when an image is emotionally reinforced by subliminal stimuli, an unconscious ideological perspective can be added. Behavior and values initiated by subliminal stimuli appear similar to effects of posthypnotic suggestion. As in hypnosis, it may be impossible for some individuals to resist instructions not consciously experienced, regardless of how absurd they might appear under conscious, detached critical analysis.

Unconsciously induced behaviors closely parallel neurotic-compulsive responses. Posthypnotically suggested subjects will compulsively do bizarre things which they then attempt to rationalize, explain, or justify as normal. Those who perceive themselves as most in control almost invariably turn out to be the least, the most suggestible. Culturally, citizens of both the U.S. and U.S.S.R. (especially the roughly 50% of Soviets who are Russian) appear to have a built-in, traditional, compulsive *need to control*,

a need exploited in both cultural systems. Control fantasies make these two nations extremely dangerous to each other.

In one of numerous similar experiments by this author, a student was given a posthypnotic suggestion to open a window and shout several obscene phrases at people on the street below several minutes after awakening from a trance. He was also told not to consciously recall the instructions. He performed precisely as instructed, closed the window, and took his seat in class. The student was then asked why he had acted so curiously. For fifteen minutes, quite sincerely, or at least so it appeared, he tried to convince the class first that he wished only to alert people on the street below to the dangerous traffic, then that he was venting his anger at someone he strongly disliked; finally he gave an elaborate rationalization about his experiments with reactions to obscenity for a paper he planned to write.

The student had demonstrated a profound aspect of human behavioral conditioning. He was not overtly lying, as far as anyone present could determine. With emotional conviction, he attempted to justify behavior that, by any outside criteria, would be considered bizarre. He seemed compelled to convince the audience that his behavior had been normal, defending it as if it were an ideological position, with allusions to freedom, obligations to society, and altruism.

Assuming the absence of emotionalized counter positions, subliminal stimuli can suggest both an action and an emotional or ideological component to justify the action. Food ads are excellent examples. Virtually everyone has met someone with an obsessive, ideological allegiance to a product brand—a particular soft drink, alcoholic beverage, cookie or cracker, et cetera. Ideological commitment can be generated around Coca-Cola as readily as around a political candidate. Such emotional commitment is rarely a product of conscious, critical evaluation, but generally derives from subliminal conditioning.

### Drive-Related Behavior

Behaviors usually considered drive-related include such physiological needs as hunger, thirst, sex, comfort, and maternity.

Drives have been extended to include social need systems such as territoriality, greed, social acceptance, security, and aggression, which derive from survival needs, if not immediate physiological needs. Drive systems are perceived as generated from within, rather than from without. However, *within* and *without*, as far as mind-body processes are concerned, are impossible to delineate. Endless argument persists over what should be considered human drives.

Drive systems appear extremely vulnerable to management by subliminal stimuli. Subliminals can trigger a behavioral reaction to consciously acknowledged hunger. Food ads such as the Betty Crocker "Moister" (fig. 6) are especially sales-effective on a hungry woman—whether her hunger is gustatory, sexual, or involving some other drive system, as all of them interconnect within the brain. Packaging and point-of-sale advertising that utilize subliminal stimuli more powerfully affect the hungry shopper. It is wise, as many have discovered, to avoid food stores when hungry. The food basket fills up with high-calorie, high-sodium, expensive, heavily advertised foods.

The McDonald's Chicken McNugget cut-out coupon ad (fig. 14) requires little explanation. The "Buy One, Get One Free!" coupon appeared in newspapers throughout the country. The coupon ad was reprinted in the *Village Voice* under the title, "Pecker Order," with the question "what part of the hen is this?"

Unsettling contradictions lie between an individual's perception of what appeared in the ads (you think you know what you perceived) and denials of the validity of your perception from high-credibility corporations. In response to a query on the McDonald's McNugget ad, a spokesman replied, "There is no direct or implied relationship between our product promotions and sexuality." He went on to detail their twenty-nine-year history as a wholesome, "profamily" company. Doubters end up feeling guilty for having inquired.

In a TV commercial for Milky Way candy bars, two teenagers rest after a long, hard bicycle ride. Seductive music, not consciously perceived, is heard in the background. The two children voraciously eat their Milky Ways as they chat amiably. The dialogue ends when the girl asks, "Hey hot shot, aren't you coming?"

### Perceptual Threshold

Neurophysiologists have long known that only a small fraction of any given perception registers consciously. Look out the window for thirty seconds. Close your eyes. Attempt to recreate all of the information perceived. An enormous quantity of data was visually perceived, but only small fragments are consciously available. With training, individuals can learn to increase conscious awareness of the total percept. This author was once trained to enter a room, exit after sixty seconds, then list 100 items perceived in the room. It is a technique almost anyone can be taught; unfortunately, the ability erodes rapidly when training stops.

Conscious awareness will never remotely approach the total information available from even a single perception. This line between conscious information and that recorded unconsciously (subliminally, subconsciously, nonconsciously, etc.) has been termed the *perceptual threshold*. Several writers have concluded that as little as  $\frac{1}{1000}$  of a total percept recorded by the brain appears consciously available (see Dixon, *Subliminal Perception*, pp. 1–10). It is not quite that simple. The threshold constantly changes in response to physiological tension, prior cultural conditioning, incoming stimuli content, attitudes, and a variety of other factors. To make the problem more difficult, this imaginary line between conscious and unconscious varies from individual to individual. The threshold is also affected by cultural indoctrination. Some national cultures appear far more repressed, with generally higher thresholds, than others. The content of repressions can vary from culture to culture.

Perceptual engineers—artists, writers, poets, musicians, composers, and audiovisual technologists—constantly explore new ways in which perceptual thresholds can be managed among audiences or readerships. If an audience easily perceives the erect penis embedded in the Tanqueray gin ad (fig. 5), the ad is a waste of money and likely to provoke angry responses from readers. The embedded genital sells gin only if not consciously perceived. The artist had to anticipate correctly the level of cultural repression among potential readers to design the embed. It may seem surprising that, in the supposedly sexually liberated U.S. a genital

embed is met with repression. Once again, media demonstrates that very little in the world is what it appears to be, especially cultural values that involve sexual fantasies.

A reader who can relax and scan details—abilities not encouraged in U.S. culture—can easily find the embedded Tanqueray genital. Similar ads were shown by this author to remote Inuit tribesmen in the Canadian arctic. In contrast to their civilized, educated (culturally propagandized) Anglo neighbors, they consciously perceived the genitalia immediately. They considered the ads outrageously humorous, thought it especially funny that anyone would want to publish pictures of genitalia. Several joked that the embedded penis was part of some strange Anglo fertility ritual. Subliminal embeds appear culture-bound. They evoke side-splitting hilarity in one culture and are invisibly repressed in another.

One of the most important discoveries about subliminal phenomena was that the more subliminal, the lower the threshold, and the greater the effects upon perception and behavior (see Dixon, *Subliminal Perception*, pp. 283–84). It is difficult for North Americans to comprehend that something invisible, empirically unknowable, can affect behavior. Allusions to DNA particles, viruses, ions, and atomic particles sometimes do not help.

On this printed page, the black ink offers visual contrast against the white background. If you kept thinning the black pigment, at some point there would be nothing visible on the paper—at conscious or unconscious levels. The closer the ink could be brought to the white color of the paper, without the letters disappearing completely, the more effective it becomes as a subliminal perceptual stimulus. The paper could then be overprinted a second time with clearly visible pictorial images or words. The white background would appear empty, yet the words would actually be there very lightly printed. Similarly, with audible volume levels, the lighter, less detectable the sound, the more effective it is as a subliminal behavioral influence.

Subliminally embedded paper stock has been available to printers for many years. Paper manufacturers learned long ago to texture, delicately emboss, or weave words such as *SEX* into paper stock. These embedded *SEX*es are not part of the watermark. This expensive paper is generally used for calling card stock or for sales

or promotional brochures. Virtually any high-quality business card or sales brochure, held up to a light for ten seconds or so and viewed in a relaxed manner, will reveal a mosaic complex of the word *SEX*.

### ! The Paper Is the Message, Not the Message

In 1983, Osman-Kord, Ltd., a Southern California paper company, developed a process whereby made-to-order subliminal commands, strategy reinforcement messages, and other persuasive imagery could be very lightly inked on paper stock. The embeds are completely unavailable to conscious perception, regardless of examination techniques applied. Individuals who know the embedded message can sometimes pick out portions through normal perception. But, without such knowledge, there is no way to detect the subliminal content. This technique is superior to the simplistic *SEX* embeds, much cheaper, and extremely flexible. Many individuals had learned to detect the *SEX* embeds. But now the message remains unavailable to conscious perception, avoiding any threat to media credibility and integrity.

This subvisual enhancement process was tested by Dr. Sidney Weinstein's Neuro-Communication Research Laboratory in Danbury, Connecticut. Using a double-blind and three measurements—brain wave EEG evaluations, test subject ratings, and actual purchasing behavior—roughly 100 subjects were studied. Three paper stocks were embedded respectively with the words *BUY*, *SEX*, and *NO*. Ads for candy and books were then printed on the embedded paper stocks, as well as on control paper without embedding.

Weinstein's experiment indicated that embedded messages were "significantly influential" in stimulating purchasing behavior, modifying brain response measures of interest and arousal, and in influencing how the subjects rated the products advertised. And there was no way to prove anything was embedded in the paper. The *Wall Street Journal* hired the Georgia State Crime Laboratory and The Georgia Institute of Technology to test and examine the subvisually enhanced paper. They found nothing, yet the paper appeared to affect behavior. The Arizona State University Ad-

vanced Optics and Lunar Laboratories also examined the enhanced paper with computer image-enhancement techniques. They found nothing. Roughly 15,000 people, in various experiments, failed consciously to perceive embedded words and pictures in the paper. Potential users of the paper, however, were wary. They feared looking foolish if it turned out nothing was embedded in the paper. *"Seeing is believing"* is a deeply integrated cultural myth in Western civilization.

In another study, Dr. Bruce Ledford at Alabama's Auburn University used subvisually enhanced paper in research on self-esteem, an important factor underlying academic achievement (see Ledford, *Effects of Preconscious Cues*). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a standard measurement test, was printed in two versions—one upon plain paper, the other upon paper subvisually enhanced with "I Love You!" and large hearts. Self-esteem test scores on the subvisually enhanced version increased an average of 34.7% in an underachiever group of students. Average students improved 13.1%.

Ledford's research demonstrated that human perception, especially at the subtle unconscious level, is far more involved in decision-making and value judgments than anyone had suspected. This perceptual sensitivity becomes extremely important as people nonverbally communicate mutual expectations during interpersonal relationships.

Another technique of subliminal paper enhancement utilizes dot-screen tints, in which microscopic dots 0.125 mm in diameter, 130 lines per square inch, 8 dots per millimeter, are computer-produced on transparent sheets. Positive images (words or pictures) are inked or printed on the transparent dot screen, then stripped away. The images are now negative rather than positive, made up of the areas where dots were removed. The dot screen is then transferred to an engraving. The printed page appears white but is not. The dots can be perceived through a 90-power microscope. This technique could have been used on the page you are now reading.

Heavier dot screens are used extensively in ad art for figure-ground differentiation and are available in most graphic art supply houses. In conventional ads, dot stripping provides an illusion of depth in the two-dimensional reproduction. The stripped-in dot

layers usually appear in one or more color separations. These larger engraving dots can be viewed with a strong magnifying glass. The depth illusion enters perception unconsciously; consciously, the picture remains two-dimensional. Dot deletions or additions are also often used to embed SEXes. The technique manufactures reality illusions perceptually more real than reality itself. Expensive color reproduction in ads is only utilized because it more effectively controls purchasing behaviors than simplistic black and white.

A Sacramento, California audio-video recording engineer, William Nickloff, has developed ingenious, undetectable subliminal embedding. He utilizes argon-ion laser scanners on color separations through a Chromacom electronic image processing system. Nickloff designed unique dot patterns for commercial illustrations that modified conscious perception. Once the theory of subliminal communication is understood, technological innovations appear unlimited.

### *Verbal Behavior*

The words we hear, speak, and write are stimuli for both thoughts and actions. They also provide rationalizations, explanations, definitions, and/or justifications for perceptions. Individuals seem to enjoy the fantasy that they say what they mean and are in control of language and behavior. "Tell it like it is!" we insist. But the language of commercial mass media is a highly developed tool of exploitative persuasion.

If we wished to turn out hard-nosed, demanding, critical consumers of language and media, we could. Numerous analytical methods are available to anyone who can read and write, and the subtle, devious, and exploitative aspects of language are not difficult to expose. But U.S. education does just the opposite; it inculcates passive acquiescence to the status quo and those who control and sustain it. Media truths become *the* truths: "Trust us, we wouldn't lie to you!"

Perhaps the most perplexing problem in language is *meaning*—not what someone *said*, but what they *meant*. *Meaning* offers a fundamental dilemma in human perception. No two individuals

ever attribute precisely the same meanings contextually to the same words. Meaning variations appear in terms of *more or less* or *similarities and differences*, rather than simplistically as *either/or*. Meanings expressed by speakers or writers may also be inconsistent with those interpreted by the audience. And, of course, there exist unconscious meanings for words that may or may not be similar to those at the conscious level.

This author once participated, with two other writers, in preparing a speech for then President Dwight Eisenhower. Though a gifted administrator, Eisenhower was incapable of adequately constructing simple English sentences. His public speeches were written by numerous ghosts, among them the skilled verbal craftsman Emmet John Hughes. Even Eisenhower's famous phrase, "the military-industrial complex," is credited to Dr. Malcolm Moos, then president of the University of Minnesota, and presidential aide Bryce N. Harlow.

The speech in question, however, was presented in support of a local Republican senator during a brief Eisenhower visit to California. For thirty-six sleepless hours, three writers turned out draft after draft, reviewed by a White House deputy press secretary who offered terse comments like, "Much too specific!" "Ease up on factual references!" and "Take it back and fuzz it up!" "Fuzz it up," we discovered eventually, meant avoid all clear, factual statements about anything more specific than the time of day—and be careful about time references because of the four U.S. time zones. The speech was endlessly discussed for likely audience reactions, belief and attitude reinforcements, and implied meanings.

The final draft was a masterpiece. The verbiage was polished, eloquent, elegant, and inspired. There was only one problem. Would anyone take the empty rhetoric seriously? The speech read smoothly but said absolutely nothing about anything. This was precisely what it was intended to say. During audience interviews after the oration, most expressed satisfaction with the great man's words. "Ike really gave it to them!" "He has my vote!" "I like the way he thinks!" "Great speech!"

The audience had been given a verbal Rorschach inkblot—into which they could project whatever they wished to hear and interpret. Each perceived the speech in terms of their individual expectations, values, anxieties, and loyalties.

## The Floating Cultural Crap Game

There are no fixed, immutable, time-universal definitions for any word or phrase in any language. Glossaries and dictionaries are continuously revised as meanings, definitions, and conscious and unconscious usage change from day to day. Surprisingly, this acknowledged fact of ever-changing, evolving language is rarely emphasized in school systems or researched in universities. Languages are learned as permanent systems of logical syntax with durable definitions and meanings.

At best, languages are floating cultural crap games of ambiguities, contradictions, paradox, and vague uncertainty, crudely organized around both conscious and unconscious perceptions of meaning. Meanings vary between speakers, writers, and audiences. The phrase, "I know exactly what you mean!" is questionable in any language. The phrase usually means exactly the opposite. Superficially, mathematics was thought to be the only objective language, until the development of quantum mechanics made even that objectivity questionable (see Russell). For any language system to be a reliable, objective, and precise instrument of human communication, lasting and specific agreements on definition would be required. These are basic reasons that extensive research efforts in the U.S. and U.S.S.R. over the past thirty-five years failed to develop computer-generated language translations. Contextual variations in meaning are infinite and constantly changing.

Nonetheless, fantasies of verbal objectivity and uniformity of meaning are constructed to sustain illusions of credibility, integrity, and authority. Such fantasies are accepted, apparently, because humans desperately need to believe in the permanence, predictability, and consistency of language. This psychological need appears common, and is imposed upon all known language systems. Absolute truth of verbal meaning is easily the most dangerous myth humans have created. Linguistic truths must always remain tentative assumptions, regardless of human cravings for eternal validity.

Guesses, or intuitive conclusions, can be strongly influenced by subliminal stimuli. These engineered guesses appear to function outside conscious awareness, though humans attempt consciously

to rationalize their guesses. When someone *guesses* verbally that a product, person, or idea is superior or inferior to other options—totally outside any factual reference or structure—the guess is likely a product of subliminal indoctrination. Guesses usually involve a preference. Once the preference is stated, factual verification and support are accumulated to justify or back up the guess, although individuals often invert their perception of the sequence involved. They convince themselves that logic and *cause* have resulted in a clear, specific, factually defensible *effect* or conclusion. Verbalized guesses are often the result of a collective aggregate of subliminal stimuli perceived from both media and the cultural environment. Little more than fantasized projections, these guesses appear retained in memory for extended periods. Collectively, guesses provide a durable cultural orientation. A predisposition to believe can be overturned only by extensive reindoctrination, an overwhelming barrage of indisputable factual data, or by some trauma related to the predisposition.

The cumulative effect of these guesses, as they reflect in behavior, can be described as *culture*. Culture, in this sense, has little to do with popular definitions. Derived from media, environmental influences, education, language, and interpersonal relationships, these guesses range from preferences for a food or beverage to evaluations of individuals, groups, and even nations. Can you really trust the U.S.S.R., the U.S., or Burger King? Such questions are nonsense, of course, as are all stereotypical designations.

Susceptibility to subliminal stimuli usually depends upon individual or group stress, anxiety, or intense concern. This probably evolved quite normally as a survival mechanism, and there may be no complete defense, nor would a complete defense be desirable. Perhaps the best we can hope for is some level of defensive ability to maintain a degree of autonomy against the pressures of media persuasion. The art, science, and craft of manipulation will certainly become more intense, more skillful, more sophisticated in the future.

Vulnerability can be reduced through a decrease in tension or stress, especially the stress media-engineered to merchandise products, people, and ideas. You can defuse anxiety-provoking media, but you have to learn how. Anyone with a relaxed, contemplative view of the world will perceive from a more reflective, analytical,

detached perspective. Conscious concern with factual data, critical evaluations of intuitive guesses, and constant alertness to the human motives behind communication would reduce the level of vulnerability.

Perhaps the most effective defense against media manipulation comes from knowledge about culture, language, media technology, and perception. People in high-technology cultures have been, in effect, trained in the opposite direction—to visual illiteracy, ignorance of language, and docile preferences for superficiality over substance. Most individuals cannot discriminate between a photograph, a manipulated photograph, and a painting; between reality-oriented perceptions and fantasies. They cannot even distinguish *real* ice cubes in an ad from fantasy ice cubes.

### *Adaptation Levels or Judgmental Values*

Experiments in adaptation level (AL), or judgmental value manipulation, began over a century ago in psychology and sociology (see Peirce and Jastrow). AL studies recorded judgmental evaluations on scales ranging from *good* to *bad*, *weak* to *strong*, *beautiful* to *ugly*, et cetera. The early AL experimenters contributed to the development of public-opinion and attitude research widely used today in the media engineering of public consent. Public-opinion surveys are regularly utilized before, during, and after ad and public-relations campaigns, public policy decisions, elections, and merchandising efforts. Many experiments with AL scales (see Dixon, *Subliminal Perception*, pp. 31–38) have involved tests with subliminal stimuli. For example, perceptual judgments of hot and cold, electrical shock intensities, relative sizes, weights, and loudness were easily modified with subliminal stimuli.

Individuals and groups were asked to make perceptual judgments on numerical scales. They were then exposed to subliminal stimuli that portrayed the value as *more or less, stronger or weaker, heavier or lighter* in the direction opposed to the first judgment. Significant changes in the initial judgments occurred in virtually every experiment.

The implications of these obscure, academic experiments are awesome. These were perhaps the first scientifically measurable

demonstrations that humans and their value systems could be easily manipulated. Humans could be media-engineered to become virtually anything anyone was willing to spend enough time and money to accomplish. If simplistic judgmental values could be altered by subliminal stimuli, certainly more complex judgments were vulnerable. It is a short step from judgments of size, loudness, and weight to those of truth, morality, validity, and significance. AL investigation should have provided a fertile ground for exciting research. It did not. Published research in the area was never publicly extended into meaningful areas of life experience—a typical trait of so much behavioral-science research. AL experiments virtually disappeared from university research and scientific journals. The commercial application of AL theory, however, continued in the mass media.

Advertising is the omnipresent background to U.S. culture. Ads enter perception unconsciously and once in the memory system compete for permanent storage. The cost of selling is a concealed portion of every item purchased by retail consumers, a hidden tax. According to a recent standard marketing text (Kurtz and Brone), the cost of U.S. selling (i.e., marketing) ranges from 40% to 60% of each consumer dollar. The cost of selling exceeds the costs of production—labor, raw materials, and manufacture.

U.S. culture institutionalizes and legitimizes the way selling manipulates, but conceals the mechanics of what is really going on. Consumers are incessantly admonished that they make the decisions, propagandized ad nauseam that they think for themselves. A critic might reasonably question why it is necessary to spend so much money, creative talent, time, and effort in the management of purchasing behavior if consumers really think for themselves. But anyone who questions the paradox will likely be written off as a subversive radical.

Few serious studies have ever been produced on the social effects of perceptual submersion in ad media. The subject is ignored in favor of heavy propagandizing for the communications industry, supported by the ad industry.

In studies of human behavior, anyone who seeks something new, untouched, and undiscovered is probably wasting his or her time. Human preoccupations have been endlessly described, measured, evaluated, and probed from every conceivable direction. One

productive technique for discovering something new, unobvious, of major significance to survival, is not to search for something new. Search instead for something that has been around a long time, is taken for granted, so obvious as to have remained unseen, undiscovered, repressed, or hidden from public view intentionally or otherwise. Every society has such hidden, tacitly forbidden intellectual treasures that await discovery and illumination. Find out what is not discussed, not studied, not critically examined. Ignore what lies on the surface, what everyone else perceives, argues over, and finds threatening. Societies conceal their exposed nerve endings, which, when examined, become fearsome and painful. But, as mentioned earlier, "No pain, no gain!"

### Purchasing Behavior

Scientists avoid subjects unlikely to compensate them for time and effort or that may evoke punishments. Scientists, like everyone else, pursue a society's rewards. Purchasing behavior is a major area of research concentration in this country, consuming hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Sophisticated computer systems correlate this data in hundreds of ways to provide insights into why, how, and which people purchase and consume various products and brands. Purchasing is the most exhaustively researched area of behavior in the Western world.

Priorities in the U.S. appear grotesquely inverted. The National Institute of Mental Health reported that "over a six month period during 1984, 18.7% of U.S. adults [29.4 million people, almost two out of every ten] suffered at least one psychiatric disorder." Only one-fifth of those with disorders sought treatment. Most consulted physicians rather than mental health specialists." The U.S. has evolved a culture that makes individuals mentally ill in large numbers. Drug and alcohol addiction statistics are included, of course.

To appreciate the economic and social magnitude of this hidden dimension of U.S. culture, during 1983 the top twelve U.S. food advertisers invested over \$3.5 billion advertising their products—3% to 11% of total sales income. Roughly 10% of the total ad investment was used for research on purchasing behavior.

Media ads have two simple, measurable objectives—to increase

the number of consumers and to increase the quantities they consume. Success or failure is usually measured against these two criteria. Addictive substances such as alcohol, tobacco, and drug products are manipulated into purchasing behaviors. But these products induce a variety of medical and psychiatric pathologies. The well over \$1 billion invested in alcoholic-beverage ads during 1986 (roughly half on beer) directly involved alcohol-related pathologies. The half-billion-dollar 1986 investment in tobacco ads correlated with tobacco-related pathologies, including cancer, emphysema, and circulatory and coronary diseases.

### Psychopathology

A substantial body of medical research concludes that subliminal stimuli are responsible for most, if not all, psychosomatic illnesses. These illnesses originate in the mind or in mental or emotional conflict (see Dixon, *Preconscious Processing*, pp. 177–78). Psychosomatic illnesses include paranoia, phobias, and other stress syndromes, many of which eventually develop into a variety of physiological breakdowns. Both conscious and unconscious stimuli initiate interaction between mental and bodily processes. Repressed or unconscious information gleaned from ads usually involves sex or death taboos—socially unacceptable ideas. Such subliminally perceived ideas may sell brands and products, but they also conflict with current value systems. Their content often includes appeals to latent homosexuality, ethical dilemmas, bizarre fantasies, and suggestions of self-castration or self-destruction.

Such content can be destabilizing or worse for some individuals, evoking anxiety, anger, fear, resentment, revulsion, or even lust at some level of the conscious-unconscious continuum. Powerful emotional reactions can be induced in large audiences without their conscious awareness.

The physiological effects of subliminal stimuli are less intense when transmitted through media than, say, through interpersonal relations or environmental stimuli. Because of their widespread use in advertising, however, they occur very frequently. Unnoticed at a conscious level, the effects appear cumulative—eventually integrating into the general cultural system. Hysterical fear reac-

tions were initiated by movies such as *The Exorcist* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Their producers publicly admitted both films contained violent and frightening subliminal stimuli (see Key, *Media Sexploitation*, pp. 98–116). Such experiences repeated frequently, year after year, decade after decade, eventually provoke physiological changes in viewers.

Most individuals under subliminal stimulation consciously feel only brief discomfort, if anything. Few are aware of any specific threat or damage to their well-being. Over an extended period of years, however, the constant bombardment of subliminal stimuli can lead to permanent changes in organ systems and their complex processes. The constant overstimulation of physiological defense mechanisms could eventually modify or exhaust those systems. Such changes can initiate serious structural revision in the mind-body physiological interrelationship, varying in intensity and significance among individuals.

Moreover, subliminal stimuli have been demonstrated to affect physiological functions and behaviors even after a single, isolated exposure. The unconscious memory system appears to retain emotionalized information indefinitely. Subliminally induced memories feed back into behavior in many ways which are at present poorly understood. Purchasing manipulation is, of course, only one of these behaviors.

Both immediate and delayed responses to subliminal stimuli can activate various autonomic physiological systems within the body. Experimentally shown to respond to subliminal stimuli are the adrenal-neural-cortical systems. These interrelated organ systems initiate mind-body defenses against threats of injury. The two adrenal glands, for example, located near the kidneys, produce several important hormones, especially epinephrine and norepinephrine. The nervous system connects every glandular organ and bodily system to the brain.

When an individual confronts danger, epinephrine secretions heighten an individual's fear response and increase mental alertness to danger (flight reactions). Norepinephrine secretions help prepare an individual for action, particularly aggressive action (fight reactions). Both flight and fight reactions can be triggered by subliminal stimuli (see Dixon, *Subliminal Perception*, pp. 205–28, and

*Preconscious Processing*, pp. 124–26, 177–78; see also Brown, "Conceptions of Perceptual Defense").

Subliminal stimuli effects on the adrenal-neural-cortical systems—which interconnect organ, brain, and nervous systems—can also modify homeostatic functions, the body's way of regulating and controlling autonomic systems. These include the regulation of heart rate, blood flow distribution and pressure, sweating or body temperature, and respiration or breathing, which increases blood oxygen levels. Though the generalized response to subliminal stimuli of these autonomic systems can be measured, the systems are extraordinarily complex, interrelated, subtle, and only partially understood.

### Media Damage Invisible and Cumulative

Subliminal stimuli can make an individual instantly more alert and more sensitive to additional stimulation (priming) due to changes in brain-activating systems.

1. Blood flow can be shunted to the muscles and brain from the peripheral blood vessels and digestive organs.
2. Heart rate can be increased to supply oxygen for muscles and the brain and to evacuate bodily wastes.
3. Blood coagulability can increase to counter threatened bleeding.
4. Peripheral blood veins can constrict to shunt blood to muscles and lessen blood loss in case of wounds.
5. Sweating can dissipate heat generated by muscle activity and the body becomes slippery.
6. Pupils can dilate to improve vision in the dark or make an individual's appearance frightening or sexually stimulating.
7. Increased blood sugar can decrease blood volume.
8. Increased respiration can alter oxygen–carbon dioxide exchanges.
9. Stomach and intestinal changes can precipitate bowel or urinary evacuation.
10. Finally, subliminal stimulation of adrenal medullary secre-

tions (brain and body glandular outputs) can trigger adrenocorticotropic-pituitary hormones, which stimulate other major defense systems.

Every portion of the human brain connects to every other portion of the brain and body via billions of microscopic neuron networks. Nothing within the mind-body interrelationship exists in isolation. Endocrine, neuro-anatomic, and neurophysiological systems all interconnect. Emotionalized stimuli can influence an individual's resistance to illness, affecting the immune system and increasing susceptibility to infection. Subliminal stimuli can energize cerebral processes that underlie whole systems of emotionally charged ideas. These mind-body interreactions can also be initiated by hypnosis, suggesting a similarity of effects upon physiology and behavior for both hypnotic and subliminal phenomena.

Specific pathologies have been linked to subliminal techniques in ad media. Eating and nutritional disorders—such as bulimia, pica, anorexia nervosa, and obesity—afflict some 15 million people in the U.S. A large proportion of food advertising employs subliminal techniques, such as those demonstrated in the illustrations. Yet there has never been a serious attempt to study the relationship between food advertising and food-related pathology—a testament to the political influence of advertisers.

A 1986 National Health and Nutrition Survey indicated the average adult male carries twenty to thirty pounds more fat than he should, the average adult female an extra fifteen to twenty-five pounds. The U.S. population became substantially fatter while the media talked more and more about health food, exercise, and dieting. Twenty-five to 30% of people in the U.S. are overweight—the nation's major health problem. According to Metropolitan Life Insurance tables, 11 million people in the U.S. are severely obese, exceeding desirable weights by 40% or more. Obese individuals have three times the normal incidence of high blood pressure and diabetes, increased heart disease levels, shorter life spans, and extremely high risk levels for respiratory disorders, arthritis, and certain cancer types. Obese women have five times the normal risk for uterine-lining cancers and increased risk for colon, rectum, and breast cancers. Obese people have more osteoarthritis because of weight overloads on joints, more accidents and injuries as they

are less able to protect themselves, more respiratory and digestive difficulties, and even more trouble sleeping.

Similar dangers from media apply to other consumption-related pathologies, such as alcohol, tobacco, and pharmaceutical drug abuse and addiction. Illegal addictive substances—marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and the so-called designer drugs—are also hyped and romanticized by subliminal stimuli in news, drama, and popular music. Drug usage is widely celebrated in U.S. media. Indiscriminately attacking drug usage in a society where drugs are widely legitimized ensures popularity of drugs among the emotionally immature of any age. Considering the vast amounts invested in media research annually, it is remarkable that media effects on public health remain completely unexplored.

## 3 | THE UNDERSIDE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The most dangerous delusion of all is that there is one reality.

Paul Watzlawick, *How Real Is Real?*

There are no dangerous thoughts. Thinking itself is dangerous!

Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*

The natural role of Twentieth Century man is anxiety!

Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead*

The following is an attempt to synthesize current views of the human brain, perceptual systems, and their physiology. These views, however, constantly change as new insights, technologies, discoveries, and cultural influences evolve. How and why perception appears to function as it does must be viewed from the perspective of this particular moment in history. This analysis tries to avoid any single theoretical bias such as Freudian, behaviorist, Gestalt, et cetera. The evolution of psychologies has been more involved with culture than with science, adapting to what societies desired to believe or disbelieve about themselves in any respective era. Today's conventional wisdom was yesterday's wild-eyed radical vision, which will become tomorrow's antiquated, obsolete, trite, time-tattered nonsense.

Psychological theories demonstrate a peculiar adaptability to prevailing socioeconomic-political-religious-cultural dogma. The U.S.S.R.'s political culture propagated the theories of Trofim Lysenko, an agronomist whose notions of environmental influences over heredity were extended into theories of human behavior. Similarly, the U.S. techno-entrepreneurial culture once made a near religion out of the behaviorism of B. F. Skinner, who simplified psychology into a verbal, logical, mechanical-man system of inputs and outputs from an engineer's little black box. Both Lysenko and Skinner have passed into history. Each told the societies of their time what they wanted to hear. This conformity to prevailing culture has evoked accusations that social scientists are both antisocial and unscientific, propagandists for the culture usually defined as the best of all possible worlds.

How and why the human brain functions as it appears to function is still a mystery. Various sciences have described the brain's anatomical structures in exhaustive detail, at least those portions perceivable. The neurological, circulatory, electrical, hormonal, chemical, intercellular processes and their supportive structures have been microscopically measured, surgically modified, charted, and experimentally manipulated. Yet clear, precise knowledge of brain function continues to defy high technology. The most accurate statement anyone can make about the human brain is simply that nobody knows how or why the organ works as it appears to. Neurophysiologists may be the closest to finding out. They report, nevertheless, that they know virtually nothing about how the brain

stores, synthesizes, and correlates perceived information. There are only theories—literally hundreds of them.

Study of the human brain involves a paradox—studying a system by use of the system under study. The dilemma is fundamentally one of language—the uniquely human tool that enables us to study, explain, and rationalize our world. It is easy to explain the world with words, very difficult to relate words to realities. Descriptions of brain physiology (how it works) must be reported in a linear, sequentially perceived, definition-oriented verbal or mathematical language—one item at a time, one system at a time, one process and action at a time. Language is symbolic—a remote and simplistic referent for incredibly complex, interrelated, multiple-process realities—all operating concurrently at microsecond speeds through billions of microscopic neuron networks. However anyone attempts to linguistically describe the operation of the brain, their verbal description could never adequately describe the complex reality. Even if the complexity were understood, the understanding would have to be expressed in language far removed from the actual reality. Words and numbers are not the things they represent but only distant, approximate, symbolic representations. Linguistic fallibility undermined so-called behaviorist psychology, rendering it little more than a pseudoscience. Behaviorism attempted to exclude unconscious processes and has often dominated U.S. psychology. Author Arthur Koestler described behaviorism as “a monumental triviality marked by innate naïveté and intellectual bankruptcy.”

The largest electronic computer theoretically possible still remains, by comparison with the human brain, a child’s toy. The human brain’s complexities promise to remain in the foreseeable future mankind’s most impenetrable enigma. Nevertheless, new psychological theories continue to be formulated and published every year. *It is important to constantly keep in mind that theories are not truths.* No completely validated theory of human mentation has appeared. Theories are, at best, conjectural, speculative, circumstantial, projective, and often little more than wishful thinking.

In the pragmatic world of technology, often misrepresented as science, few have succeeded by emphasizing what they did not know. Theories easily become intermixed with perceptual truths. Many psychologists, notably the simplistic progeny of writers such

as B. F. Skinner, Wilhelm Wundt, Edward Thorndyke, James Cattell, Abraham Flexner, and John Dewey maintained they did not utilize theories, only empirical facts derived from human and animal experimentation. These behaviorists developed elaborate semantic stratagems to avoid theories. They literally created theories about not using theories.

When recognized as such, theories are simply tentative ways to understand something, and they can be useful, especially when they are all that is available. Albert Einstein once commented, “It is the theory which decides what we can observe.”

A theory can be useful only in a particular time, place, and situation. Some theories have been more useful than others. One thing appears certain: The human brain has nothing, even remotely, to do with electronic computers—mechanisms whose simplistic repetitive operations must be directed and controlled by humans. Current cognitive theory models the brain along the lines of a high-speed computer (see Kihlstrom, “The Cognitive Unconscious”). Curiously, Norbert Weiner’s pioneering book *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (1954) conceptualized modern computers on a comparison with the brain. Today, theorists conceptualize the brain based on comparison with computers. Over the past thirty-five years, mechanistic theories of brain function traveled full circle, changing with what societies wished to believe.

### Unintelligent Intelligence

It is fascinating to observe the latest commercial computer fantasy promoted by corporations in the interest of profit. Recent fantasies about artificial intelligence and languages provide an example. What is retained more or less permanently in any human brain might be designated *intelligence*. Of course, if the memory content is repressed, unavailable to conscious awareness, the memory would not help during an intelligence test. A vast literature argues endlessly over just how intelligence should be defined. What occurs in the most sophisticated computers, though, is hardly comparable to human *intelligence*. Intellectual games played over notions of artificial intelligence—such as those in the delightful book

Gödel, Escher, Bach, by Douglas Hofstadter—are entertaining distractions. Construction of an artificial language to communicate with aliens from outer space, however, borders on the ludicrous. Human language, utilized as a manipulative tool, often makes it difficult to communicate over the backyard fence with a neighbor, let alone between antagonists such as the U.S. and U.S.S.R. Intelligence is hardly a quality attributable to machines. A dumb machine simply does what it is told and cannot, even under the most optimistic rationalizations, think for itself. As this book hopes to point out, this quality may be rare even among humans.

Studies of human mentation have focused upon *perception*—how the multitude of sensory devices input information into the brain—and *abstraction*—how the information eventually emerges as behavior and language. Thought processes themselves can be considered behavior, with the senses feeding data into the brain at microsecond speeds. Chemical and hormonal processes also appear involved. Billions of cells within the brain communicate with billions of sensory neurons throughout the body. Perception can be generally considered *instantaneous* and *total*. That minute portion of perception, however, which becomes consciously apparent operates very selectively and much more slowly.

As readers sit comfortably in a warm, well-lighted room near a fireplace where logs burn slowly, their eyes follow these sequential, printed lines of word symbols. They concentrate on the meanings and feelings of the words, sentences, and paragraphs. Consciously, the reader is aware of only the words printed on each page, perceived by the eye mechanism, and transmitted into the brain, where associations and ideas initiate at both conscious and unconscious levels. But there is much more going on in the brain than that of which the reader is consciously aware. The distant sounds of street traffic, radio or TV receivers, wind or weather outside the room, temperature, humidity, ionization, et cetera, all register in the brain. There is the pressure of the reader's body upon the chair, clothing upon the body, gastric sounds and feelings of food inside the stomach, flavors and pressures of chewing gum in the mouth, an ankle itch, a slight throb from an old knee bruise, dryness on the lips, the odor of burning wood, and soft, crackling fire sounds.

This information, all at the same instant, continuously flows

from the senses to the brain. Consciously, you are aware only of the printed page. Unconsciously, all the data is perceived and processed, some of it stored for future reference. Everyone in the world has vast quantities of information in their brains that never becomes consciously available.

### Definitions Include and Exclude

In addition to peripheral perceptions, the brain interprets and defines each word on the page. Definitions include information at the conscious perceptual level and exclude material at the unconscious level. Mind, culture, and language are intimately interrelated and interdependent. Most individuals have the illusion that they control perception. At best, this control involves only a small portion of the process. Each culture and language categorizes and defines perceptual experience differently—controls what will be consciously perceived as significant, unconsciously stored, or dumped as irrelevant. The process also involves an individual's past experiences and emotional needs. Somewhere during the early growth process, humans learn what *not* to perceive consciously, to alter and restrict their perceptions, to perceptually defend themselves against taboo or undesirable feelings, drives, and anxiety-provoking memories.

Cultural taboos and the unconscious perceptual systems become, therefore, fundamental to the total perceptual process. What humans think they think about what they think—were people capable of this kind of abstract evaluation—is only a fraction of the total going on. Perceptual defenses appear one of the ways the brain focuses, channels, concentrates attention upon a very limited portion of the vast aggregate of information that flows each instant in, out, and through the brain.

*Perceptual defenses* can be described as mechanisms that subordinate information into the unconscious. Individuals have no conscious control over perceptual defenses, which operate automatically. Significant information deleted from conscious awareness is apparently stored by the brain indefinitely, and feeds back into behaviors. The most important of these behaviors, in the context of this book, is purchasing behavior. Purchasing behavior, however,

is unconsciously a part of ideological, political, and other social behaviors. Very little in the world of perception is isolated from the rest of what is going on in life.

Perceptual defenses operate continuously to limit conscious perception and enable us to focus on what we are doing at any particular moment. The perceptual defense process allows humans a simplified, linear, verbal definition-oriented, culturally biased illusion of reality—a slowed-down, detail-stripped, fantasy abstraction of the world, consciously perceived as the reality of the moment.

Individuals consciously perceive that eyes, ears, or other sensory inputs take in some data and ignore others. This perception is illusionary. The senses operate merely as servomechanisms—indiscriminately transmitting prodigious quantities of data into the cerebrum. The editing process occurs in the brain's cerebral cortex, the outer layer. How it all actually works is unknown, perhaps unknowable.

Eight perceptual defenses have been described, ways in which we hide information from ourselves to avoid anxiety, depression, confusion, and perceptual overload. These include *repression, isolation, regression, fantasy formation, sublimation, denial, projection, and introjection* (see Lidz, pp. 256–61). These may be different aspects of the same perceptual process. To a significant degree, in any case, they control our daily lives, thoughts, actions, and destinies. What is left out (excluded from conscious awareness) can be far more significant to survival than what appears in consciousness.

Differences among human cultures, as far as perceptions are concerned, appear a matter of degree and bias, not a difference in kind. Perceptual defenses appear universal and are largely responsible for human vulnerability to manipulation. Any cultural system is both a way of knowing and a way of not knowing.

Perceptual defenses inhibit and distort reality, and no one is ever completely exempt. These defenses modify our views of self, motives, and human relationships. Manipulation of perceptual defenses can create serious adjustment and survival problems. For example, if one world leader argues that everything he says is truth and everything his opponent says is propaganda, such nonsense—if taken seriously—sets the scene for dangerous confrontations.

The questionable nature of any such statement disappears as audiences defend against doubting the credibility of a trusted leader loyally serving their nation. Some degree of self-deception, however, appears socially necessary. Voltaire commented that anyone compelled to look into the mirror of truth would instantly become insane. Self-deception via perceptual defenses, nevertheless, is risky business in a world where life and death—and the often thin line between them—have become fragile, momentary, and tentative. Self-deception has evolved as a basic ingredient of world cultural systems—a dangerous ingredient capable of initiating the final miscalculation.

In a TV ad for Downy fabric softener, a thirty-second drama opens in a child's bedroom. In a cheery voice an actress says, "Hi! I got something to show you!" The camera cuts to her genital area, where a bottle of Downy is held with its handle pointed at her genital. No picture of her face appears, only her genital area and the Downy bottle. Innocent viewers, if they consciously made the obvious linkage (most unlikely in U.S. culture), would conclude the linkage was accidental or in a critic's dirty mind. Perceptual defenses protect individuals from threatening associations.

### The Hidden Dimensions

*Repression*, often considered the central mechanism of perceptual defense, involves a banishment from awareness of memories, perceptions, or feelings considered threatening, traumatic, or taboo. Events or information become consciously hidden from individuals. The information still remains in the memory, however, and continues as a potential ingredient in motivations and behaviors. Individuals repress, as do groups and national cultures. Repression is entirely automatic, consciously undetected, and uncontrollable. Repressed information surfaces in behaviors. The complex process is poorly understood. *Repression* can be compared to hypnotically induced amnesia, where subjects are directed to forget specific information, then instructed to forget they have forgotten.

Repression should not be viewed as an either/or phenomenon. Some types of information appear more or less permanently hidden; memories from the first four or five years of life illustrate

this. Repressed information surfaces in symbolic dream responses, rationalizations, disguised motives, and in projective behaviors where, for example, the behavior of a hero fantasy projects into our own. The two major repressed areas surround reproduction (sex) and death—*love* and *death*, the beginning and end of life. Perceptual experiences appear most powerful when they involve these two sensitive, taboo-laden polarities of human existence. Subliminal suggestions of sex and death are ruthlessly exploited by the U.S. mass-communication industry.

A frequent aspect of repression, *reaction formation*, usually describes a tendency to repress unacceptable impulses or wishes and to manifest consciously their opposites. Austere puritanism, for example, may be a reaction formation against forbidden—though attractive—hedonistic feelings. *Undoing* or *correcting* often involves ritual behaviors such as prayer, penitence, or ceremonies that are fantasized to magically undo a forbidden wish, desire, feeling, or act. Undoing can either be consciously experienced or, more frequently, repressed so individuals are unaware of the game they are playing with themselves.

Let's say someone commits what they or significant others perceive as a vicious, forbidden, unpardonably cruel act. At that time, the individual constructs justifications for the act, ways responsibility can be redirected to another person or group. Humans have an extraordinary ability to project blame for their acts—real or imagined—onto others. Current German rationalizations for World War II atrocities are as ingenious as American justifications for the nuclear attacks upon Japan. Such social perceptual constructions can be treated as *reaction formations*. As time goes on, the actual circumstances will be consciously modified, repressed, or even denied to avoid self-condemnation. On the other hand, some individuals or groups may pursue lifelong careers of atonement for real and imagined events that evoked guilt.

The evolving perceptual construct has little or nothing to do with the original event that initiated the whole process. The greater the perceived guilt, at both conscious and unconscious levels, the more dogmatic, elaborate, and self-aggrandizing become the rationalizations. The mechanism appears common to every human being and every society. It may be an indispensable survival technique. National histories are often constructed around undoing a

reaction formation of repressed unpleasantness that would evoke anxiety if consciously deliberated.

Repression techniques are utilized by the mass-communication media, both in advertising and in the selling of so-called news information in support of advertising. The *Time* Gaddafi cover (fig. 9) is one example. If consciously available information is repressed, it functions as subliminal stimulus. The best strategy is to take nothing for granted! Consider nothing irrelevant! Commercial media content is usually arranged to increase tension and involvement. One example of perceptual overload is the rock music concert where multisensory demands assault audiences. Perceptual overload is also apparent in the design of gambling casinos. Perceptual distractions—noise, flashing lights, people, and provocatively dressed waitresses—instantly somnambulize gamblers, evoking behavioral conformity and high levels of suggestibility. The modern gambling casino has been architecturally engineered and decorated into a behavioral money-milking machine. Like the rock concert, nothing in the casino design exists by accident or oversight. As in ad media, every detail has been exhaustively studied and constructed for maximal investment return.

Casinos are media-hyped as recreational and fun. Las Vegas casinos advertise gambling as “America’s greatest relaxation!” A walk through any casino, however, reveals people pumping mechanistically away on slot machines and tensely hunched over gaming tables. Grim, expressionless faces appear robotlike in their uniformity. Recreation, relaxation, or fun is not apparent. The gamblers appear hypnotically turned in upon themselves, into private fantasies of striking it rich, of momentarily living as the fantasied rich and famous. The biggest irony, of course, is that there is actually no *gambling* going on in casinos. The outcome of a gamble is indeterminate; in casinos, the outcome is always certain. The casinos win! Always! The self-styled gamblers play only to lose.

### Safely Isolated

*Isolation* is a perceptual defense through which humans can know something consciously but avoid associations that invoke anxieties, guilt, depression, or other threatening feelings. Isolation

of linkages occurs with both individuals and groups, and can be a product of culture engineered by journalists, ads, or public-relations strategies. Isolation is not a conscious process whereby individuals or groups decide they will not associate one idea with another. It is far more subtle and insidious. Isolation can develop out of a cultural system's vested interest in preventing certain conscious connections. It can also be indoctrinated into individuals through training programs. Isolation blocks or redirects what might be considered reasonable, logical, conscious idea linkages.

*Perceptual rigidity* and *conformity* are priming conditions for subliminal indoctrination. Rigid conformists or zealots appear the most vulnerable, because they are already willing to accept the compartmentalization of ideas and relationships. What has been left out of fixed verbal definitions often becomes the most significant part of the definition. Terrorists are easily converted into freedom fighters through simple definition games for those whose worldview demands simplistic, rigid categorization.

Culturally induced isolation often develops to legitimize acts or ideas that might be offensive or questionable if perceived via normal association. Ads provide extraordinary examples. Few people consciously notice the deluge of ad media in which society is immersed. Ads are simply accepted, taken for granted as an aspect of environment. Physicians and public health officials rarely profess to see any threat to the public welfare in ads. Indeed, ads are commonly joked about and considered ineffective, a point often made by media apologists. Yet business and government know much about ad media's ability to move products, ideas, and people.

U.S. audiences are frequently surveyed about the perceived causes of alcohol and drug addiction. The long list of believed causes usually includes family break-up, peer pressure, heredity, parental failures, and boredom. Ads are rarely mentioned. The legitimization of ads is no accident. Hundreds of billions of dollars were invested over the years in the advertising of advertising. One of the most powerful forces in society, ads appear on the surface innocuous, insignificant, and benign.

From early childhood, the population has been culturally indoctrinated to accept alcohol, tobacco, and pharmaceutical products as solutions to problems of emotional adjustment. The cultural groundwork is laid by ads. Later in life the early conditioning

often explodes into addictive, self-destructive behaviors for increasing proportions of the population. Adult cigarette smokers have decreased in number by roughly one-third over the past thirty years, especially among the economic, educational, and occupational groups most able to defend themselves against media persuasion. The ban on TV cigarette ads helped, but ad budgets switched to print, billboard, and movie ads.

Tobacco smoking decreased, but only after three decades of increasing publicity about health damage from smoking. As each new public health revelation appeared, cigarette marketers increased ad budgets. Now the attrition of addicted smokers has slowed to a trickle. As illustrated in my four books on subliminal advertising, the industry heavily utilized subliminal techniques to sell and justify cigarette consumption. Anyone who has quit smoking became acutely aware of ad power during their withdrawal period. Ads sustained millions of smokers in their self-destructive behavior. Smoking, however, is becoming restricted largely to lower socioeconomic groups. In the past, most of the great movie heroes smoked—John Wayne, Humphrey Bogart, Robert Taylor, Gary Cooper, et cetera, and so did the characters they portrayed. The cigarette was symbolic of sophistication, manhood, courage, success, wealth, and even honesty. Today, on the other hand, when a writer introduces someone who smokes, that character is invariably a loser. In the movie *Fatal Attraction*, cigarette smoking symbolized Glenn Close's character's emotional instability.

Another unsettling example of *isolation* involves the selection and training of nuclear missile launch crews. These young officers have been carefully selected, trained, and rigorously disciplined to avoid conscious linkages between their duties and the fate of millions of human beings in target populations. Initial selection as suitable candidates was based on strict psychological test criteria. The average combat-experienced officer usually does not qualify for missile training. In personal combat, an ability to make quick conscious linkages is vital to survival. The missile-launch crew-person must have a potential for being disciplined into a dehumanized, narrowly focused, task-oriented professional. Candidates receive rigorous conditioning never to dwell consciously upon the human consequences of their work. Technologically indoctrinated, they are taught to view themselves as merely mechanics, engineers,

and administrators. They must be capable of discarding personal considerations. Their ultimate act will incinerate millions of humans and condemn millions more to lingering, excruciatingly painful deaths. Indeed, the outcome of their act is certain to vaporize the past, present, and future of civilization. The vast majority of their victims will be those who have never lived, and who never will. The monstrous consequences are, perhaps, beyond human comprehension. This helps facilitate isolation and repression. Very few people can do this kind of work.

Through relentless, disciplined psychological conditioning, the air force trains missile crews into fantasy technological obsessions, totally removed from human realities. Trainees are never permitted to ask why. Blind obedience is the overpowering central objective. Missile crews are under constant surveillance, testing, and evaluation for psychological "weakness." High rates of mental disorders prevail among the crews, for which they are usually transferred into lower-pressure assignments. The Strategic Air Command's definitions for mental disorder are curious. In the real world, only a seriously ill psychopath could launch a nuclear missile. *Insanity* must be reconditioned to appear as *sanity*, and vice versa. Any slight indication that a launch crew member might not fulfill the mission when ordered results in career termination. Somewhere in their brains, nevertheless, crew members continue to know exactly what they are doing. Madness, for some, is one reasonable way out of the paradox.

Testimony at both the Nuremberg war-crimes trials and at the Tel Aviv trial of Adolf Eichmann verified that the Nazis faced a similar problem in the selection and training of SS extermination-camp officers and enlisted personnel. Rigorous, disciplined dedication to technology, fanatic patriotism, religious zeal, and other obsessive preoccupations were utilized in carefully planned selection and training programs. Reality perceptions were reconstructed. The camp work was isolated from human, ethical, and legal considerations. Not everyone qualified as mass executioners. Combat veterans were usually excluded. SS personnel were viewed as a select elite, dedicated patriots, men and women able to make a heroic sacrifice for their nation.

After victory, few Allied investigators understood what had occurred from a Nazi perspective. SS men and women were viewed

with horror by the Allied nations, as a hand-picked group of psychotic, sadistic monsters. This was convenient scapegoating, blaming a few for the sins of the many. The SS were not perceived as psychopaths within Nazi Germany. They reflected the highest ideals of the Third Reich. Most societies define *psychopath* as an unstable, unreliable, irresponsible, mentally ill individual preoccupied with his or her own delusions. SS volunteers were considered the most desirable of all German citizenry. Superbly trained, they *isolated* daily acts from all human considerations. They served and obeyed, extraordinary technicians who nobly performed for the greater good, for survival of their way of life, their freedoms, and their faith in the Nazi leadership.

Isolation, as a perceptual defense, plays an important role in the world today. It is not always easy to determine whether information has been isolated, repressed, or both. Isolation separates emotion from thoughts or ideas by suppressing linkages and conscious recognition of consequences. When reaction formation, undoing, and isolation combine, public prayers for peace and goodwill may conceal unconscious desires for war as an outlet for aggression, personal indulgence, power acquisition, profit, or combinations of all of these.

Both the U.S. and U.S.S.R. military leadership have now murderously destroyed civilian airliners, Korean and Iranian, and slaughtered hundreds of innocent men, women, and children. Both nations gave identical, ludicrous justifications—the tragedies were the fault of the civilian airliners. That such rationalizations were found acceptable demonstrated the lack of conscience and power of repressive isolation that dominates what passes for world morality. Professional moralists in both nations said little except to exploit the propaganda advantages. Each ignored their own terrorism while condemning that of the other side.

### Hiding Behind Numbers

*Quantification* is another kind of isolation technique. Numbers inhibit the conscious use of information, and are often perceived as incontestable fact. Quantification (among nonmathematicians, at least) also implies *objectivity*—another mythological belief struc-

ture. Quantification, statistical or mathematical, can be used to isolate information from reality-oriented perceptions, verbal descriptions, and counterreferences. Numbers offer a superb technique to depersonalize and dehumanize people. In Nazi death camps, detailed numerical records neatly concealed and legitimized the horrors inflicted upon humans. The U.S. military's daily body count in Vietnam—enemy bodies, of course; ours were “casualties”—concealed the slaughter for many Americans.

The preoccupation with numbers in both the U.S. and U.S.S.R. is often an exercise in hiding things. Both societies have deeply instilled cultural fantasies that numbers do not lie. Perhaps numbers do not lie, but mathematicians and statisticians frequently lie, manipulate, and deceive. They are paid handsomely to do so. Numbers can misrepresent reality as easily, if not more so, than words. Both languages—verbal and mathematical—are useful tools only with conscious awareness of their limitations and frailties. Symbols can never be the things they symbolize.

Numerical objectivity is a fallacy. Like verbal language, numerical designations must be abstracted by humans. They are subjected to varying interpretations by both initiator and receiver. Numbers constitute merely another language with built-in paradoxes, confusion, contradictions, and hidden agendas.

So-called scientific facts—like so much of perceived reality—are rarely what they appear to be. The moment a scientific fact is cited in support of an argument, it no longer has anything to do with either science or facts. While scientific methods of inquiry, examination, and discovery have produced useful explorations into the unknown, science becomes psychological silly putty when used to hype an industry, cause, ideology, product, person, group, or nation. *Unquestionable scientific facts attributable to high-credibility sources* impose an end to critical thought. Especially in high-technology cultures, science is accepted as a mythological, godlike creation presumed omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent.

Real scientific advances usually stem from the discovery of errors in human perceptual judgments, judgments once considered scientific themselves. Scientific advances are new perceptual formulations that correct prior errors or omissions. The process continues infinitely, and always with considerable uncertainty. People with

something to sell indiscriminately lump technology into science. Technology is a machine, a gadget, a profitable process or invention easily perceived, profitably produced, and usefully applied. All this has nothing remotely to do with scientific exploration. The illusion of scientific truth provides the ultimate attribution, replacing scriptural confirmations of validity. Scientific truth, accepted without question or reservation, isolates an individual from constantly changing reality perceptions. Science must always be viewed as tentative. The discovery of “truth” terminates the scientific and intellectual process.

### Regression: Marching Forward into the Past

*Regression* is perhaps the most easily observable of the perceptual defenses. It functions throughout life as a recurring part of development. When people become obsessive in their regressions, however, they retreat from reality-oriented perceptions. This occurs, for example, when individuals or groups strive excessively for independence, then fall back to a point when they felt secure, protected, where others assumed responsibility for their lives. Regression occurs collectively in nations that seek the fantasied solutions of the past for the threatening dilemmas of the present.

The Old West, celebrations of military victories, and the proverbial “good old days” are U.S. examples. The “good old days” of Norman Rockwell and Garrison Keillor are nostalgic fantasies of a world that never was except in today’s imagination. Such idealized fantasies provide a cover-up for unpleasant realities of the moment. Many desperately need to believe such a world existed, where security was realized in simplistic moral platitudes, where fear and anxiety were absent, where family and friends were reliable and trustworthy. The worse contemporary realities are perceived to have become, the more intense this regressive search for security.

Regression begins early in life and can be considered a major adaptation technique to the instabilities always present in perceived realities. Regression can become so thoroughly established during childhood that such dependent tendencies appear normal and natural. Regression may also take the opposite turn. Dependency may

be rejected for a fantasized worship of independence, autonomy, and a lack of social rules and responsibilities. Whichever way regression turns, it depends upon a rejection of perceived reality in favor of a simplified fantasy of "the way we were."

Individual or group failure to overcome regression and deal with reality adjustments can evolve into major psychopathology. The mass-communication industry has developed the regression mechanism into a multibillion-dollar annual bonanza. Years after the "Bonanza" TV series was canceled, tourists still search Nevada for the site of the original Ponderosa ranch. The ranch, or anything resembling it, never existed outside of Hollywood. The actual Old West was a nightmare of filth, disease, discomfort, privation, greed, injustice, and criminality, coupled with imminent threats of violent death.

The fantasy prevails as a substitute for a reality that would hardly be saleable either to audiences or to advertisers. The media fantasies constructed around various wars—Vietnam, Korea, the two world wars, the Mexican war, Civil War, War of Independence, et cetera—become glorified versions of a grim, complex, brutal, and morally indefensible reality. Populations constantly indoctrinated with such fantasies lose the ability to distinguish between illusion and reality. Regression fantasies can threaten adjustment and survival. Someone who attempts to resolve complex problems in day-to-day life with the techniques utilized in violence fantasies by actors such as Sylvester Stallone, Clint Eastwood, Charles Bronson, and John Wayne may soon find themselves either in prison or in a mental hospital.

So-called traditional values exist in all known cultural systems. Looking backward into history, however, as a nation or individual walks forward into a dangerous and unknowable future, avoids reality. Even researched by a professional historian, the past is a fantasy construct. The "good old days" adapts idealized perceptions of the past to perceived needs of the present—a fantasy adapted to a fantasy. The Old West, of course, looked back to the Old East for basic value systems. The Old East, in turn, looked back to Western Europe. Every era creates a mythology about its predecessors, with values that seem unattainable in the contemporary period.

The principal problem with history, of course, is that only a small portion of what actually happened can ever be known. Knowledge is always biased, subjective. What is known, for the most part, is what certain individuals or groups wanted known. Histories are highly selective, as are the biases that lie consciously and unconsciously behind human perception. The biases behind history can be far more intriguing and insightful than historical "facts." It appears to be a basic human need to perceive the past as a justification for the future. Histories are vital to individual and group identities, the basic building blocks of culture. Usually, they are handed down from generation to generation verbally. Written histories are still a new invention, representing only the past two thousand years or so. Where histories have not existed, they were invented.

The psychological need to project present uncertainties upon a fantasy of a stable past may constitute the most significant perceptual vulnerability in the human heritage. In the U.S., of course, the past is created by the mass-communication industry in the pursuit of profit, power, or both. U.S. history, like most national histories, tells people what they want to hear about themselves. "Objective history" is as much a mythological creation as "objective" anything else. Inherent biases in human perception will never disappear. A mathematical science of history is as inconceivable as an international history of the world, a history acceptable to all cultures.

Regression technique is rampant in alcoholic-beverage advertising. Portrayed by an actor with whom the target audience can identify, the drinker is surrounded by friends and family who are accepting, forgiving, and undemanding. They accept the heavy drinker as he or she perceives himself or herself—lovable, dependent, friendly, and good-humored, a joyful companion. Seagram's 7 Crown whiskey sponsored a series of magazine ads that portrayed large numbers of people at parties. There was always one person in the crowd who stood out, surrounded by warm, supportive, accepting friends, who fitted into the group as jovial, warm, sincere, a person who could take a drink or leave it. This special individual was even shown as not drinking, but supportive of others drinking, and happy. Real life, of course, is never like

this for incipient alcoholics. They are usually a painful embarrassment to friends, family, and employers, quite the opposite of their fantasy selves.

### Fantasy Formation: Mythology Versus Reality

Mythology is generally associated with ancient history, and modern peoples view themselves as liberated from such primitive notions. We perceive ourselves as hard-nosed pragmatic realists, far removed from the superstitions of yesteryear—as did the ancient Greeks and all the societies that existed between us and them.

Nonetheless, we are all involved in *fantasy formation*, a subordination of reality in favor of a fantasy world, peopled by fantasy people, in fantasy relationships and situations. This unconscious process provides a supportive structure for escapes from mature reality orientation. When combined with elements of regression to a past with imagined glories, security, justice, honesty, and so on, fantasy formation can become obsessional.

Rooted firmly in reality, creative fantasy can be an asset. Retrenchment into magic and wishful thinking, however—coupled with a search for fantasized sensual gratification—can plunge individuals and groups into serious psycho- or sociopathology. Constantly reinforced by high-credibility media, fantasies can become the perceived reality of a society. The absurdity of the deliberately generated fear of capitalism in the U.S.S.R. is equaled only by the fear of communism in the U.S. Such fear results from a manipulation of the latent paranoiac tendencies in most populations. Frequently, when fantasy dominates reality, anyone who questions the fantasy will be defensively considered subversive, insane, or even criminal. Romanticization of justice can impede the pursuit of justice. Fantasy substitutions for reality in any area of life can become tragic, even lethal.

Profitably manipulated by communications industries, the mechanisms of fantasy formation have become instruments of power, status, and privilege. Fantasy formations via stereotypes of Jews, women, communists, blacks, homosexuals, and heretics (virtually

anyone not like "us") were the fundamental victims of the Holy Inquisition, the Third Reich, and many world dictatorships. Political or ideological prisoners are subjected to punishments and tortures far more barbaric than those inflicted upon murderers, thieves, rapists, and other criminals.

Fantasies about ghosts, goblins, witches, and heretics are as far removed from reality as are the fantasies of ethnic, political, cultural, psychological, or social stereotypes. Decisions based upon one nation's fantasies of another nation's fantasies, acted out as realities, provide little hope for survival.

### Sublimation: Push-ups, Jogging, and Cold Showers

*Sublimation* is not, strictly speaking, an unconscious perceptual defense, though it can become compulsive, obsessional, and involve unconscious motivations. Sublimation is a normal, essential aspect of human growth, development, and socialization. Taboo or consciously unacceptable drives and wishes are sublimated, channeled into more socially acceptable or constructive pursuits. In self-destructive behaviors, such as with the compulsive workaholic or in other obsessional avoidance strategies, sublimation can evolve into a nightmare.

Sublimation involves the replacement of libidinal, aggressive, or otherwise unacceptable energies with counter-energies or drives. Athletic competition, scholarship, or compulsive work can substitute for anger, sexual preoccupation, or ego sensitivities. Sublimation can occur in response to unconscious motivations but is in itself a consciously determined behavior. It is often unclear, however, where repression and sublimation begin or end. The threshold between conscious and unconscious perception is a delicate, constantly moving barrier.

Excessive drives for achievement, power, money, or control over others involve sublimation. Religious idealism or fanaticism often stem from individual or group attempts to deal with powerful but unacceptable emotions, wishes, fantasy projections, and feelings.

## Denial: It Did Not Occur

*Denial* is used by individuals, groups, and even nations to defend themselves against disturbing feelings, contradictions, thoughts, or events. An unpleasant situation is simply rendered nonexistent. Responsibility or blame is projected neatly upon someone else. Repression and denial are often interrelated and undistinguishable. Denial is far subtler than simple lies or misrepresentations. Lies are usually discovered and exposed. Denial is an unconscious mechanism that permits anyone to escape conscious awareness. Denial can even develop into a powerful conviction. It is often involved in religious fervor, irreconcilable marital conflicts, chauvinistic nationalism, and political or national idealism, and is a frequent aspect of *blind faith*.

Denial gets us off the hook when we are confronted with unpleasant, verifiable facts or contradictory information. For example, there is virtually nothing constructive or complimentary anyone in the U.S. can publicly say about the U.S.S.R.'s communist government, and vice versa. After some seventy years of antagonistic confrontation, the two populations have been exhaustively conditioned to dehumanize each other. Consciously and unconsciously, each society is indoctrinated to deny any but the most negative view of the other. Anyone thinking autonomously would have become suspicious about the consistency in each side's negative view of the other. (Consistency is another constructed illusion in human affairs.) About the only thing consistent about human beings is their inconsistency.

Culturally reinforced denial becomes what each side perceives as normal, reasonable assumptions about the other. Each denies the validity, justifications, idealism, convictions, legitimacy, humane motives, and integrity of the other. If children behaved that way, they would be punished and sent to bed without dinner. To be sustained over a long time, denial must have some perceived factual justification, which can be created or simply selected out of context.<sup>17</sup> If you wish to dislike someone, a reason can always be discovered. High-credibility sources must constantly reinforce denial. This defense mechanism is rarely powerful enough to self-perpetuate when opposed by a respected majority.

Reaction formation may accompany denial, turning an unacceptable feeling into its opposite. Feelings of jealousy or hatred, for example, may be denied, undone, and converted into apparent trust and love. The conversion process is completely unconscious and serves as a cover for the unacceptable feelings, which persist at an unconscious level, though likely to surface sooner or later.

Marriage counselors frequently comment upon the mating of incompatible couples, a culturally integrated phenomenon in many Western cultures. Incompatibles attract each other like magnets—"across the crowded room," "love at first sight," "love walked in," "from the first moment on . . ." Mutual attraction between incompatibles is powerful, often irresistible. Each individual has converted underlying hostility and distrust into conscious, emotionally overpowering love or physical attraction.

Media love, as reflected in commercial drama, often depicts such relationships as ideal. They rarely follow up on "true love" two, five, ten, or twenty years later, after years of unhappiness, divorce, and tragedy. A priest employed as a marriage counselor commented, "Individuals are creatures of God, made in His own image. The mating process, however, appears to be operated by the devil. Media models persuade two totally incompatible individuals to share life experiences. Basing their lives upon media fantasies, especially those that emphasize sensual indulgence, the two are guaranteed to subject one another to the tortures of the damned. Heavenly bliss uncontrollably evolves into Dante's Inferno." Successful, profitable drama, perhaps, but vicious, mutually destructive human relationships.

## Projection and Introjection: Whom to Blame?

*Projection* and *introjection* are extremely important perceptual defenses, both to individuals and to the mass-communication industry. These defenses are converted via media into large-scale public behaviors. Both are completely unconscious to the individuals affected. They appear, like the other perceptual defenses, natural, logical, reasonable, and supported by perceived facts, con-

sensus, and respected sources. *Projective images* are universally false. They project stereotypical generalizations that can be either good or bad, rarely both (which might be more consistent with reality). Audiences, with the reinforcement of media, construct perceptually a fantasized image of the Libyans, North Koreans, Nicaraguans, Palestinians, Iranians, Russians, or whoever appears as the antagonist of the moment. Similar image constructs develop among peoples who are the targets of stereotyped projection. Mutually reinforcing stereotypes invariably involve generalized fantasies of good guy–bad guy—none of which ever have anything to do with reality. Projections unconsciously involve repression, denial, and fantasy formation.

Projective stereotypes unconsciously project powerful, simplified, reciprocally confirming abstractions. These fantasies can justify a wide range of dangerous, even homicidal behaviors. Projections conceal human diversity, complex motives, and factual information behind barriers of blinding bigotry and simplistic labels. Individuals are reduced perceptually to objects. The devastating process is shamefully manipulated by world leaders who often project their own ulterior motives on their adversaries. Simply, we blame them for what we have been trying to accomplish ourselves in the pursuit of profit and power. Projections appear in such assertions as “you cannot trust” the Soviets, Cubans, Arabs, Japanese, Germans, Chinese, Indians, people over or under thirty, et cetera. The process, once put into motion, is unconscious within both individuals and groups. As it gains media momentum, however, fewer and fewer individuals question or oppose the fantasies.

As long as projective gymnastics are a conscious aspect of strategy, calculated for effect, they simply misrepresent reality in order to influence opinion. This assumes the other side is informed about projection and consciously considers it rhetorical nonsense aimed to attract votes, sell products or persons, or please audiences. Serious dilemmas occur when projective strategies are believed by the easily influenced. Adolf Hitler told the world in his 1926 autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, exactly what he planned for Germany, Europe, Russia, communists, Jews, and the world. Leaders of the day refused to believe his insane projective fantasies, which appeared as mere cynical rhetoric designed only to win elections and power. Such

rhetoric had been used throughout the world, and still is, as rabble-rousing inducements, simplistic answers to complex questions.

On the other hand, if projective lies, exaggerations, and manipulations are perceived as truth, the perception could be terminal for all involved. When U.S.-baiters in Moscow, or their counterparts in Washington, hurl violent, projective rhetoric, the world can only hold its breath in the hope that they are lying in the pursuit of some momentary objective; and, of course, in the hope the other side will assess the insults as theatrical ploys designed only for propaganda.

Projection is unconsciously accepted as truth by those who do not understand the strategy. This may constitute the world's most dangerous manipulative practice. Survival in such conflicts as the 1962 Cuban missile crisis depended upon each side's ability to assess correctly the other's projective lies, exaggerations, and manipulations. Had anyone really considered the projective rhetoric valid—and had the Soviets been capable of a strategic nuclear response—the planet Earth might well have ceased to exist.

Moving from the dramatic to the banal, every heavily advertised brand in the economy has been exhaustively market-researched for strength and weaknesses against its competitors. Brand ads usually emphasize as strengths those qualities perceived as weaknesses among competitors. As most brands in a product market are manufactured by similar machinery, raw materials, technology, and labor, brands are usually quite similar. The realities are similar. The perceived realities manipulated by ads, however, appear vastly different. Differences are cosmetic rather than substantial. Perceived variations in quality or value are projectively managed through inducement of unconscious projection among consumers. Thus Subaru is “The kind of car Mercedes might have built if they were a little more frugal and a lot more inventive.” (Trust us, we wouldn't lie to you.) An ad for Merit cigarettes proclaims, “Almost every low tar cigarette claims great taste and less tar. But try a few and those claims quickly go up in smoke. With Merit, there's a real difference. It's called Enriched Flavor. Only Merit has it.” (Tobacco smoke actually suppresses and anesthetizes taste and enriched flavor.) Stay Trim diet gum's promoters advise, “By the time your diet pill starts working it may be too late.” (If you

believe this, it is.) Gordon's gin comes from "England—known for its playboys. And its gin." (Keeps playboys playing with themselves.) And Noxzema promises "finally, a cleanser that won't clash with your complexion." (Incredible; does the president know?)

Jealousy in marital relations is also often a manifestation of projection. One mate projects his or her infidelities, real or fantasized, on the other. Projection is a complex perceptual defense that plays a part in a broad range of psychopathologies, as well as in day-to-day relationships. The process can be compared to efforts at ridding the body of irritation, discomfort, tension, or frustration. Projection can also involve unconscious desires to be free from an unacceptable wish, desire, or feeling.

In media, whether in entertainment or the structuring of news and information, writers weave projective characterizations into their stories. These are characters into which the audience will project or identify. Projective characterizations can be either positive or negative, but usually reflect archetypal values.

For example, the character of J. R. Ewing in *Dallas* was designed by the writer, director, and actor around unconscious projective identifications of older, lower-middle-income males who could hate J. R. for those qualities of malice, greed, and lust they deny in themselves, or like him for acting in ways they would like to but do not dare. *All in the Family*'s Archie Bunker provided audiences with projective identification of the bigot as a nice guy. Prejudiced individuals, constantly under pressure in a society where open discrimination has become unpopular, could project into Archie their own frustrations and dilemmas. The TV show was widely acclaimed for opposing prejudice, which it did for audience segments who enjoyed making fun of a not-too-bright bigot. The large national audiences that supported the series over many years contained, however, large audience segments with a strong appeal to projective intolerance. In effect, Archie Bunker told each segment what they wanted to hear. Once again, very little in media communication is what it appears to be on the surface.

Marshall McLuhan described projections as "Narcissus Narcosis." As we perceive endless hours of media involvement, we unconsciously project and identify with heroes against villains. Audiences identify with characters in ads, dramatic programs, and news in a simplistic, stereotypical good guy–bad guy context. They

vicariously become the characters in the drama, projecting into roles in a way that narcotizes, anesthetizes, and numbs them against reality intrusions. Rambo transforms from a funny-book hero into a potential solution for real world complexities. From the investor's perspective, the only intolerable characterizations in commercial drama, ads, or news are those that go unnoticed. Love or hate him, but he'll be out of work if audiences ignore him!

The design and staging of rock groups provide another example of projective identification. Images are engineered by sophisticated music investment corporations to be instantly revolting to parents and evoke panic about their children's welfare. For the immature audiences, the group must project their defiance of parental supervision and moral restrictions and offer an affront to authority figures of all types. The engineering of rock music and the groups who play it focuses on the instabilities inherent in the ages of their fans. Heavy metal rock groups, for example, are designed to project a fantasy of Satan as savior for neurosis-prone, lower-working-class teenagers. Heavy metal has made enormous profits for record companies but has promoted suicide and antisocial violence as an answer to adolescent problems.

### It's My Fault

*Introjection* parallels projection; it is the unconscious turning in upon oneself of responsibility for evil thoughts, unacceptable feelings, distrust or contempt for others. The introjective process is typified in the reflections, "It is not his fault, he is not bad. I am!" Or, "They are not hostile to me. They don't like me because I am hostile to them. It is me who is worthless!" People may blame themselves or project into themselves someone else's negative traits. Self-condemnation may be perceived as a way to preserve a needed love or identification figure.

For example, when projection engineering succeeds through rock music and the fan becomes estranged from loved authority figures, introjection may develop as a compensatory behavior. Immature, manipulated rebels eventually blame themselves for their rebellion. Even among those individuals who have been rocked into alcohol and drug abuse, the musicians, music, and promoters

are rarely blamed. Damaged fans invariably blame themselves. The result is a tragic loss of self-esteem.

Much of the mass-communication industry depends on the exploitation and manipulation of human weakness. The one consistent theme permeating virtually all advertising is consumer inferiority. By unconscious comparison, the consumer has to be a loser, deficient, and ordinary. Ad models are always glamorous and desirable. The idealization works like the unobtainable carrot being dangled in front of a jackass. That carrot can dangle just out of reach throughout a lifetime of consumer behavior.

When individuals are persuaded to view themselves as inferior, they can be directed into the purchase of any product or brand that promises fulfillment and human completeness. Consumption will supposedly bring ever-elusive perfection. Advertiser promises, of course, remain eternally unfulfilled, and the individual gradually submerges into a fantasy of consumption as an end in itself. Ad-dependent consumers become increasingly dissatisfied. Failure to attain the ideal proposed by ads is devastating to self-esteem. The mechanism, however, is self-perpetuating. Consumers are propelled from one new product to another, then another, then another, as life continues on the treadmill of consumerism. They consume, therefore they exist.

## Part Two

# LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

## THE TOOLS OF INDOCTRI- NABILITY

# 4 | MEDIA— THE BRAINWASHING LAUNDROMAT

Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of *truth* and *knowledge* is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods.

Albert Einstein, *The Evolution of Physics*

Everyman's world picture is and always remains a construct of his mind and cannot be proved to have any other existence.

Irwin Schrödinger, *Mind and Matter*

We build this world, for the most part, unaware—simply because we do not know how we do it.

Ernst von Glasersfeld, *Introduction to Radical Constructivism*

In a small though very important volume published in 1973, Nobel Laureate Konrad Lorenz outlined *Civilized Man's Eight Deadly Sins*: those eight areas of imminent disaster created and sustained by so-called modern civilizations. Each of these eight areas has the potential to end our biological and social heritage within the next century or less—possibly much less. Lorenz's list of sins is ominous and familiar—nuclear energy and weapons, overpopulation, environmental devastation, atrophy of feelings, abuse of inventive and innovative energies, genetic decay, destruction of traditions, and human indoctrinability.

It is the last of these that makes all the others possible. If humans can be indoctrinated to mindlessly pursue their self-destruction—as they have especially been in high-technology cultures—the process may be reversible. We must at least hope that self-annihilation is not inevitable. But it is clear that technologies of indoctrination are well known throughout the world. In the U.S., the commercial mass media—that is, the ad and public-relations industries—indoctrinate and control culture and, through culture, the perceptual constructions of the general population.

A political-economic-cultural propaganda exists in even the simplest ad—much more powerful as implication than as overt statement. In the U.S.S.R. and other communist bloc nations, political ideology is propagandized overtly, which may actually render the media far less effective. Propaganda that looks and sounds like propaganda must fail. Soviet information technicians hard-sell their political and philosophical system with the same fervor that their Madison Avenue counterparts bring to the hyping of underarm deodorants.

Indoctrinability, however, is never apparent to the indoctrinated. The indoctrinated includes *all of them*, of course, and, far more difficult to admit, *all of us*. With its linguistic pretensions to superiority, the human species is by far the most vulnerable to persuasion, indoctrination, propaganda, brainwashing, programming, conditioning, or whatever label anyone may wish to use. In laboratory experiments, monkeys must be rewarded for compliance, usually with a cracker. Humans have been taught to comply when rewarded only with a picture of a cracker, embedded with subliminal SEXes. The people most vulnerable to indoctrination are

those in media-managed, high-technology societies. The U.S. population, subjected to roughly \$150 billion in ad investment during 1989, is the most exhaustively propagandized society ever to exist.

Remarkably, virtually everyone in developed countries desperately tries to believe they are immune to indoctrination. They think they think for themselves and readily know the difference between truth and falsity, fantasy and reality, superstition and science, fact and fiction. Technologically sophisticated cultures are conditioned to accept belief systems, behaviors, and values that would have been rejected out of hand by their stone-age predecessors. Primitives would instantly sense the obvious threats to survival and adjustment, or simple nonsense, inherent in many of the treasured beliefs of modern society. Many readers of this book cannot distinguish a real broken bottle from a painted fake or a real ice cube from a fantasy ice cube. Can they be taken seriously with their pretensions to knowledge about what is going on in Washington, Moscow, or their own living rooms?

The perceived “free, educated, intelligent, civilized” populations of the world now provide the greatest danger to world survival. They are, generally, unaware of the extent to which they are manipulated, managed, and conditioned by media, governments, leaders, and institutions that serve the vested interests of their political-social-economic systems. Vested interests and ruling elites appear a constant throughout the known evolution of human societies—perhaps the only constant in social organizations.

The issue of *how humans think they think* is central to the continuation of civilization as we have come to know it. Unfortunately, the issue usually provokes outrage, anger, irritation, defensiveness, or boredom. Those individuals most vulnerable and victimized by human indoctrination systems will be the most defensive about their particular indoctrination.

The question of “objective reality” appears fundamental to human survival in this and the next century. It appears impossible to know for certain what goes on around us at any given moment. We are an integral part of the reality we perceive. No known way has been discovered whereby humans can detach themselves from their perceptions and their myriad of inherent biases. Self-help with unconscious perceptions is absurd, impossible. The realities

perceived are products of unconscious socioeconomic-political conditioning. Over time, these perceptions aggregate into cultural perspectives.

For well over 2,000 years, scholars and scientists have questioned whether there *is* a reality outside, independent from the mind. It has been difficult, especially for so-called civilized men and women, to accept that human perception and experience exist only in the brain. This includes religions, ideologies, knowledge, and everything perceived over a lifetime.

The perceivable environment appears largely an invention, one often manipulated in the interest of those who profit from human perceptual conditioning. Among the earth's species, only humans appear to self-manufacture their thinking, knowledge, cognitive perceptions, and consequently their actions. Few, however, consciously acknowledge that they do this themselves, have it done for them, or both. Humans have traditionally projected justifications for behaviors onto some fantasized "objective reality."

The questionable nature of what we accept as *objective reality* or *truth* remains carefully repressed, hidden from awareness, yet ever-present under the surface of consciousness. This underlying threat to perceptual validity drives us into stronger, ever more violent defenses of illusions and rationalizations. Repression does not occur accidentally or casually. Humans unconsciously repress to avoid anxiety or unwanted confrontations with reality. Ideologues, the most repressed of all, perceive their world as a simple, symmetrical, logical place that avoids complexity, contradiction, inconsistency, or paradox, and have an abiding fear of being unable to cope with undefined or uncertain reality.

The ideologues' ignorance occurs not because they do not know. Many adamantly *do not want to know how* they manufacture their reality, who controls the manufacturing process, and the concealed or invisible objectives, agendas, and mechanisms of the game. Most of us take the world pretty much for granted. It was here long before humans evolved. It is tacitly assumed the world will be here long after they leave. The daily vexations of life are, for most, an all-consuming preoccupation.

Since Plato, arguments have raged over how humans achieve their knowledge of reality, and how reliable and accurate that knowledge can be. One common thread through well over 2,000

years of recorded science and philosophy is that *truth* must relate to some idea of objective reality. In order to be considered *truth*, a proposition must be verifiable and related to a verbally definable objective reality in the world around us. Mankind's most noble preoccupation has been the search for *truth*. Each time *truth* was discovered, however, tragic mischief ensued.

### Is Objective Reality Real?

In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant in 1783 argued that the human mind does not evolve laws from objective reality, but imposes these laws upon reality, conforming it to preconceptions, motives, self-interests, biases, and cultural conditioning. Though Kant's *Critique* is still read, his questioning of perceived reality is usually skipped over. The notion is subversive, threatening, certainly incompatible with the conventional wisdoms of a high-technology society.

So-called modern men and women are well indoctrinated—especially many of those considered scientists, scholars, experts, and authority figures—and highly disciplined in cultural conformity. They rarely question the notion that verbal truth must always match perceived reality—an impossibility. Any suggestion that perceived realities are a variable product, manufactured by human perceptual bias, immediately threatens the way in which humans have been conditioned to interpret their world.

These questions, at first, appear complicated, remote from immediate concerns, and completely impractical. They are easily ignored, even though the nature of perceived realities is a fundamental aspect of decision-making each day in business, government, family relationships, military strategy, and almost every other area of human endeavor. Many convince themselves they cannot understand the questions and have no reason to care about the answers.

It has been fascinating, often amusing, to observe individuals attempt to cope with the exposé of subliminal advertising. The problem has never been that they cannot perceive the embedded obscenities; almost everyone perceives them quite easily. But they do not want to deal consciously with the embeds, and will often

seek any avenue of escape possible. The idea of subliminal indoctrination evokes fear among many. This author has been accused of hypnotizing audiences and readers, putting dirty ideas into their heads, playing projective games with Rorschach inkblots, forcing people to see pornographic images that were not really there. Anyone who doubts the power of repression can simply try to explain the illustrations in this book to their friends, neighbors, and family.

Fortified against any assault upon the world as we have been indoctrinated to perceive it, humans often channel such threats into the wastebasket of repression. The power of individual or group repression should never be taken lightly. Over many tragic centuries, humans have defended themselves, even with violence, against disturbing insights into the mechanics of *how they know they know*.

To an average, practical, hard-nosed individual, this probably seems at first glance to be philosophical nonsense—conjecture, meaningless speculation, even boring pedantry, just another vain exercise in how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. Nothing could be further from the truth! A continuation of human life and what passes for civilization will be predicated upon an ability to untangle the above dilemma. Our belief about *how we think we think* is the basis for most of the world's assumptions about itself. Many of these assumptions point toward self-destruction.

The human brain creates, or constructs, its own perception of reality in relation to its indoctrinated preconceptions, engineered motives, self-interests, and cultural backgrounds. We actually manufacture these ideas, concepts, and percepts—or have them manufactured for us by the media. For example, humans invent their friends and enemies, loves and hates, success and failure, truths and fallacies. Ideas such as freedom, democracy, justice, security, along with a dictionary of similar verbal concepts, continue to guide our decisions—at least consciously; such verbal concepts, however, mean vastly different things to different individuals. Contradictions often render the concepts meaningless. For example, socialist nations define these generalizations far differently than does the capitalist world, the Latin world differently from the Anglo, the Christian differently from the Moslem, the Catholic

differently from the Protestant. One nation's terrorists are another nation's freedom fighters.

Economist Thorstein Veblen considered “occupational psychosis,” a society’s means of perceived economic sustenance, to be the basic conditioning source for behavior and value judgments. For example, a simple bridge over a canyon will be perceived far differently by truckdrivers, pedestrians, city planners, bankers, engineers, bicyclists, or housewives. Economic bias is an extremely important aspect of perception, though the phenomenon is certainly far more complex—operating at both conscious and unconscious levels.

In the U.S., U.S.S.R., and other technologically advanced societies, the major instrument for the manufacture of reality perceptions is the mass communication industry. In the U.S. these media are controlled to reflect the reality perceptions of corporate executives and ideologically compatible institutions. Their collective self-interests become culturally integrated, blindly or unconsciously accepted by audiences as reality perceptions—in effect, *truths*.

This does not include the superficial day-to-day events, polemics, ups and downs, conflicts, successes or failures within the system; rather it is the basic, underlying belief structures, things known to be *true* at conscious, if not unconscious, levels of perception. Belief structures usually go unnoticed by individuals who hold them. Assumptions or expectations are taken for granted, accepted without question, considered immutable facts of life. To assault or question these suppositions, whose most tenacious grip on an individual exists at unconscious levels, is usually considered a subversive act, or even worse if the assault is taken seriously by others. Jean Piaget, the French child psychologist, noted, “Intelligence or knowledge organizes the world by organizing itself.”

A useful analogy might be drawn from U.S. news information, organized to sell ads, which patronizingly tells readers about themselves rather than about world events. Such “news” highlights the reader’s infinite wisdom, nobility, kindness, freedom, pleasure, good taste—all the positive self-image values. Negative information, at this perceptual level, would evoke conscious rejection by audiences.

Glorified, romanticized pseudo-information about celebrities,

for example, endlessly confirms the one-dimensional stereotypical objects with whom audiences identify. People, in any reality-oriented sense, will never make it in *People* magazine. *People* creates and sustains celebrity fictions designed to sell the magazine and its ads. From the teenybopper fan magazines to network TV interviews with the rich and famous, the celebrity-milking industry serves as ads for ads.

Advertising and its supportive “news” information work similarly. The audience is the basic subject matter covertly embedded in each sentence, each picture, each scenario. Credibility rests not upon verifiable factual perceptions, but upon audience identifications and projections. Media fantasies of reality, manufactured in the interest of advertisers, reflect the emotional needs of the audience—what they wish to hear about themselves is *included*; that which would offend fantasy projections is *excluded*.

Media audiences, conditioned through many decades of constant reinforcement of wishful thinking about themselves, lose their ability to discriminate between perceptual fantasies and realities. Periodically, events occur that cannot be swept under the perceptual rug and force themselves upon audience attention. Objectionable information, in conflict with popular perceptions of reality, may be considered for short periods. But really bad news will eventually be repressed and will disappear from public attention.

Journalist I. F. Stone made a long, successful career out of exposing deceptions, deceits, and lies by politicians. Stone simplified the problem: “Every government is run by liars, and nothing they say should be believed.” The problem is that he left off half the equation. No lie ever works unless someone is willing to believe it. People often prefer lies over truths if they uphold cherished self-images. This condition is at least partially a product of long-term immersion in the ad-media massage.

No one gets away with an overt lie or misrepresentation if the audience really wants to know what actually occurred. Victims participate in the crimes of the victimizers. For a con to work effectively, those being conned must be participants in the game. Alert, critical, questioning audiences cannot be conned. They must first be persuaded to trust, believe, have faith, and accept the “objective truths” of their manipulators.

Perceptual bias also plays an important role in manipulation.

The selection of one single sensory stimulus relegates the other senses to the status of unconscious, subliminal inputs into the brain. Sight, for example, is an overpowering sensory experience. If something looks good, the sensitivities of the many other sensory inputs into the brain turn off consciously, even though they remain active subliminally.

In one experiment, two dozen students camped out in a weekend retreat at a Canadian monastery. During the three days, the group was continuously blindfolded. Blindfolds were padded so light could not enter perception. Most of the students learned to cook, dress, wash, and care for themselves without dependence upon sight. The experience was powerful and revealing. For the first time in their lives, they realized the unused sensory potential that exists within every human. Two students, sightless since birth, were included in the group to serve as guides.

By the second day, the students knew—they were uncertain just how they could know—when an animal entered the room. Many accurately distinguished whether the animal was a cat or a dog. Most could walk rapidly through a nearby apple orchard without bumping into trees or one another. A few even ran through the orchard. The students also later reported they somehow understood the deeper feelings of others much more clearly than ever before. Many found it easier to *trust*, or—in several incidents—to *distrust* the motives, sincerity, and honesty of others. Several students dropped out during the second day. The discovery of an entire range of sensory potentials—most of which became available in a nonverbal, feeling, intuitive awareness—was emotionally overwhelming.

In his autobiography, Jacques Lusseyran reported his World War II experiences as a leader of a French underground network, *Défense de la France*, which successfully fought Nazi occupation forces. Lusseyran lost his sight in an accident when he was eight years old. As a young scholar, he organized a Resistance cell that later joined with the larger network. Lusseyran’s unique role was to interrogate new recruits. Unsighted, he was able to perceive the candidates through voices, smells, and audible movements, and he weeded out traitors, weaklings, and emotional unsuitables with uncanny accuracy. Lusseyran used the term “moral odor” to describe his unsighted perceptions of sighted individuals. “They were

not at all," he explained, "as they were said to be. They never suspected I could read their voices like a book." Finally captured, he spent fifteen months as a prisoner in Buchenwald. He was among the thirty out of 2,000 in his original transport to survive. Lusseyran eventually became a professor at Cleveland's Western Reserve University. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to lie successfully to an unsighted individual. This is one of the reasons the sighted often feel uncomfortable around the blind without understanding why.

While truth remains an evasive, ephemeral product of perception, a remote approximation or at best a well-intentioned evaluation of multilevel realities, calculated lies are comparatively easy to discover unless vested interests anesthetize perceptual agility. In a heavily documented article in the respected *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Newsday*'s managing editor Anthony Marro recorded a shattering list of overt lies told by recent presidents and their administrations. A few of the lies might have been vaguely justified by national defense considerations. Marro demonstrated that the Reagan White House developed lies into institutionalized tools of public administration. President Reagan's appearance and his actor's skill with nonverbal communication powerfully concealed the often shallow substance and content in his rhetoric. Misinformation became a major policy. Worse, the Reagan lies were motivated by politics—not national security. President Reagan lied to the world at a level unprecedented in recent history, a significant achievement considering the awesome misinformation policies of former presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon.

Reagan overtly, calculatedly, looking his audience straight in the eye, lied on a grand scale about a balanced budget, the Grenada invasion, food stamps and welfare recipients, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Central America, the Middle East, civil rights, commitments to the handicapped and retired, environmental protection, social security disability laws, the attack on Libya, military expenditures, the federal deficit, and the Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars). A sizable pyramid of lies and deceptions surrounded the secret Iranian arms shipments and the illegal funding of Contra terrorists in Nicaragua, an affair that became a damaging embarrassment to the U.S. and its allies. Anyone remotely in touch with reality

could have anticipated this logical consequence of ad flimflam operating at the highest level of public trust and confidence. Unfortunately, this is not the only recent example of manipulation and deceit in governmental information policies. Considering the culturally institutionalized nature of public manipulation, it will probably not be the last.

These lies do not include statements reflecting an honest difference of opinion, interpretation, or emphasis. These lies were specific, known, misstatements of recorded, verifiable, factual data. The misinformation mechanism is well known to politicians. The president can lie like a used-car salesman before eighty million people on national television; subsequent exposure of the misinformation appears in scattered, piecemeal, uncoordinated form over succeeding days, weeks, or months. The follow-up stories appear inconspicuously in the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and other publications. Journalist James Nathan Miller tells in the *Atlantic* of the twelve hours of research to expose as a lie only one sentence of a Reagan speech. Compounding the problem of time and expertise, editors across the nation are reluctant to buck the fantasies of their readers unless the stories reach major magnitude.

Marro cited President Reagan's excuse for the lies, announced through his public-relations staff, that "It didn't matter whether some of his [the President's] stories were literally true—his numerous misstatements of fact, his confusion about detail, and his repeated anecdotes about supposed welfare cheats no one was able to confirm, for example—because they contained a larger truth." According to Bill Kovach, a *New York Times* editor, "We've been dealing with an administration that freely states—and stated early—that literal truth was not a concern." David Wise wrote in his unsettling book *The Politics of Lying*, "The chief criterion in government is not truth, but the opposite, developing lies that will be plausible enough to be accepted as truth, lies that will be believed."

The importance of all this is not merely the existence of liars in high places. Most people already knew this, at some level of knowing. What is important, especially in today's dangerous world, is that populations accept lying as a normal aspect of government

policy. Liars, as mentioned earlier, cannot succeed unless they find people willing to cooperate—enthusiastic victims conned into believing they will also benefit from the lies.

### Self-Flattery— The Foundation Stone

Audience self-flattery, both overt and, more often, implied, is the foundation stone of effective commercial communication. Above all else, audiences must be told what they wish to hear about themselves. The phenomenon is not unique to any single culture. Negative information will often be ignored, repressed, or otherwise perceptually defended against.

The average U.S. newspaper is today over 95% ads. Unconscious perception does not discriminate between so-called news and advertising information. Most readers do not draw a clear distinction between the two, nor could they. Information is simply information at unconscious perceptual levels stored in a vast memory system not compartmentalized as good and bad, true and false, fantasy and reality. Value judgments appear a function of conscious deliberation. Audiences are not conditioned consciously to accept news as truth and advertising as lies. The idea might be worth exploring, however, as it could resolve several major public health and sanity questions. Unfortunately, the world of perceived realities is not that simple.

The residue of information accumulated at the unconscious level provides the basic cultural program or bias upon which other conscious perceptual systems or structures are organized. Through this information residue, individuals and groups define who they are and where they are going, and derive hierarchies of basic values. This analogy must, of course, be multiplied by all the other media perceptual exposures each day, week, month, year, and decade. Each medium manufactures or produces a residual orientation, quite invisible to the individuals, groups, and nations involved. The orientation is omnipresent and provides a cultural screen through which topical current events, entertainments, amusements, and momentary distractions filter.

In a seminar on culture and technology, a question was intro-

duced as to what an alien from outer space would perceive about U.S. culture after a brief visit. The group made a list of the obvious: massive alcohol and drug abuse, indifference to the plight of others, mindless sensory indulgence, family disintegration, criminality and needless violence—the list of horrors filled several pages. These were subjects about which most sensitive, socially concerned and informed individuals would be consciously aware, since they appear regularly in information media and are widely discussed and debated. The seminar finally concluded the alien would likely draw a grim picture of the U.S., perhaps concluding the place was hopeless.

These were observations, however, by people who spent their lives in U.S. culture. The alien, at least for a while, would have greater objectivity. Would the alien perceive the same world experienced by the seminar members? What was left out of the scenario were those things individuals in the U.S. rarely question. The single thing most obvious to the alien would be our inability to perceive consciously our own complicity, involvement, and profits derived from the long list of social ills. For example, there exists a prodigious legal investment in crime, sickness, poverty, and drug addiction from which many individuals and institutions benefit.

Another obvious thing to an alien observer would be the contradictions. These might include the continually reiterated beliefs in freedom, democracy, and equality contrasted against the ready willingness to control and exploit other peoples, or stated beliefs in peace and goodwill contrasted against the maintenance of excessive military power. The belief in equality of opportunity contrasts against the actual suppression of minority or deviant groups. The stated dedication to the common welfare contrasts against a willingness to sacrifice almost anything or anybody to the preservation of privileged status, private property, and greed.

Contradictions are usually invisible and repressed by those within mainstream culture—the beneficiaries of the system—but available and obvious to the cultural outsider—the alien from outer space, or those from poor white, black, Hispanic, or Indian ghettos. The alien's conclusion might well be that, indeed, the earth is hopeless. On the other hand, the alien might conclude that if humans could be taught to perceive *around* their cultural repres- sions, nationalisms, biases, and vested interests—and especially

around their fantasies of objective truth—they might eventually resolve their dilemmas.

The work of knowing or perceiving what appears to be going on in the world cannot ever produce a true and unbiased picture. *Unbiased truth* is a fictional conception. In modern science, even theoretical mathematicians and physicists frequently question whether they have actually discovered a law of nature or if their education, theories, and experimental techniques have molded the appearance of nature into a structure that seems to justify a law.

The point is apparent in experimental research with rat behavior. Are psychologists training the rats or are the rats—with native cunning—training the psychologists to reward them? Few rat psychologists find this possibility humorous, demonstrating anew the power of repression and cultural conditioning to invalidate questions that threaten treasured perceptions.

Marshall McLuhan admonished students to constantly question every assumption they could dredge from their memories. The moment something appeared logical, reasonable, sound, clear, and obvious, McLuhan demanded another very careful look. Perception often functions to flatter the self. This is the moment of greatest danger, when human vulnerability reaches its highest point.

### Perception of Language Abstractions

Realities are described by words, pictures, or numbers. All of these abstract symbols are even further removed from reality than is sensory perception. An individual first perceives, then conjures up symbols to describe the perception. Whatever may be said or written about reality is only a symbolic representation. Symbols never become the actual perceived reality they attempt to describe.

What human perception has, so far, been able to understand about reality separates out at least three levels of perception. So far, each level appears unique in the perceptual limitations it imposes upon observers. Different perceptual techniques are required in each. The levels do not overlap, nor can they be perceived concurrently. The three levels are *macro*, *micro*, and *submicro*.

The *macro* level includes what can be readily perceived via the senses—taste, smell, touch, sound, sight, and the myriad subdivisions of each. Simply illustrated, a slice of chocolate cake can be seen, weighed, measured, smelled, tasted, and the texture felt. Without too much difficulty or confusion, one can collect considerable macro data about the cake slice. A finger can even be pointed at one unique slice to differentiate it from another. The macro level appears disarmingly simple, obvious, and straightforward. Beware! *Macro* perception is where reality abstracts into commonsense, everyday language. It is also the level of perception where most quandaries, misevaluations, misperceptions, and disasters of a thousand varieties occur.

The *micro* level, the first step toward a deeper comprehension of reality, can be perceived with instruments that extend human sensory abilities, such as microscopes, thermometers, micrometers, spectrographs, carbon-dating techniques, and a rich assortment of mechanical and electronic instrumentations. These gadgets can extend perception down to the molecular level of reality. Precision observations and quantitative measurements of reality become possible at the *micro* level that could never be attained at the macro level.

These two levels of reality perception make the cake slice a perceptual event of staggering complexity, ranging from the molecular and cellular components up to the smooth, soft, moist texture of the icing and crumb. There is still, however, much more to know (perceive) about our slice of chocolate cake—the *submicro* level. Submicroscopic reality—the atomic nuclei, electrons, protons, neutrons, photons, ions, and the other minute particles, many yet to be discovered—cannot be perceived directly by the human senses. At the *micro* level, an individual can visually perceive cellular structures, even molecules, with an electron microscope. No one can ever directly perceive an atomic structure. The electrons and other particles orbiting the nuclei travel at the speed of light and would have to be stopped to accommodate perception. The *submicro* level of perception is only available to humans via mathematical abstractions—a language incomprehensible to most non-mathematicians.

There conceivably could exist other levels of perception not yet

available to scrutiny, but these three basic dimensions are useful in exploring perceivable reality, the so-called real world. Difficulties begin when someone casually observes the cake slice, or a picture of the slice, and then glibly states, "I know all about that slice of chocolate cake!" As long as we are concerned only with a single cake slice, in a single situation, no really great problem appears. We can use the symbol *slice* and point at the specific *cake slice* with a reasonable expectation that our verbal description will be understood. If, on the other hand, we utilize the symbol *cake slice* to describe all the millions of different slices in the world, we have moved our language symbol far away from any simple reality.

When the word symbols *slice of chocolate cake* are replaced by the symbols *Russians*, *Moslems*, *blacks*, *Chinese*, *Jews*, *Hispanics*, or any other abstract symbol, perception moves into an area of perceptual complexity with a lethal potential.

These three levels of perceptual reality—*macro*, *micro*, and *submicro*—are inherent in all physical and biological reality known to human experience. For anyone to assume they know all, or even a lot, about any individual or group is as absurd as would be a conviction they know all, or even a lot, about the Russians, Moslems, Americans, or the Shoshone Indians. These are, of course, arbitrary verbal categories, merely convenient for illustration. Verbal categorization must always remain arbitrary and tentative. There could be six, sixteen, or sixty verbally definable levels of perceivable reality. Humans may perceive enough about any subject to achieve a particular objective; they should be humbled, however, by the realization that there will always be more they do not know about any subject than the shallow superficialities of what they think they know.

As a practical matter, however, most of us live—often precariously—only at the *macro* level, a few live at the macro and micro levels, and a minute few at *macro*, *micro*, and *submicro* levels of perception. These three levels, it is important to remember, cannot be perceptually experienced simultaneously. Reality, of course, exists concurrently. But humans must perceive reality levels one at a time.

Human survival and adjustment would be well served if individuals were educated in their perceptual and linguistic limita-

tions. Any pretense to objective truth or knowledge at merely the *macro* level of human perception is at worst a lie, at best a naïve misrepresentation. The simple statement that you cannot trust Panama, communists, Republicans, Rotarians, anarchists, or Lions Club members, though often taken quite seriously, can be subject matter only for a logic of the absurd. The relationship between language and the objects or people language seeks to describe is universally subjective. In spite of this, most of us have been carefully indoctrinated to accept language at face value, to trust implicitly superficial *macro* perceptions.

Perceptual instruments, techniques, and mathematical reasoning assist human observers to achieve some degree of perceptual distance. But what passes for science at the moment continues to discover, quite unobjectively, what it is rewarded for having discovered. Much like art, science is usually whatever you can get away with at any particular moment in history. And you can get away with a lot if you understand the game. Any society that wishes to survive would be wise to carefully challenge its politicians, public and corporate administrators, generals, scientists, engineers, and others who present themselves as experts, authorities, seers, or gurus. Nobel prize-winning physicist Werner Heisenberg's perceptual principle remains a warning to the gullible: "No perceptual judgment can ever be made with complete certainty."

The *macro* level of perception is where perceivable reality translates into words and pictures. It is the level at which most people live their lives. *Macro* wars are fought, policies evolved, and definitions made that control, threaten, and destroy human life. But any attempt to define word or picture symbols must arbitrarily both include and exclude information. Not unusually, what has been excluded becomes more significant to understanding and meaning than what has been included.

### Objectivity Isn't Dead— It Never Existed

Scientific attempts to define things objectively with words from dead languages, such as Latin, never worked. Though the lan-

guages were dead, individuals using them were not. Such pseudolanguages do more to control and inhibit discovery and exploration than to objectify language. They are also effective ways to conceal information from lay audiences. Latin, of course, has rapidly disappeared as a defensible scientific language. It has been replaced by Madison Avenue hard-sell, group-think vocabularies that are even further removed from perceivable realities. The rhetorical game of labeling pharmaceutical, electronic, and biological products with unconsciously meaningful symbolic word associations has more to do with magic and myth than with science. Notice the clever sales labeling of prescription and nonprescription drug products. Such magic labels as Cephalexin, Zovirax, Enalapril, Luride, and Theo-Dur evoke feelings of strength and wholesomeness without the vaguest hint of which sicknesses they treat. Science and what science produces have become mere commercial entities designed to be hyped in the marketplace.

The elaborate multisyllabic jargons that developed in the social and behavioral sciences were similar attempts to escape the perceptual bias trap inherent in verbal language. Unfortunately, they ended up in an even worse trap—incomprehensibility. In such areas as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, pedantic attempts to coin words with specific scientific meanings, words not subject to human perceptual bias, produced a meaningless pseudoscientific babble. The moment specific definitions were accepted they began to shift and change through new interpretations. Making word definitions is much like planting trees in quicksand. The jargon became confusing, fictional, and obsolete before the ink dried on the latest glossary.

Contextual variations in meaning—what words *mean* in various contexts or arrangements—have an infinite number of possibilities; there are far too many variations to fit into even the largest computer. The meaning dilemma applies to all language systems. First, there is what the writer intended, seemingly simple enough. Then there is the question of what various individuals and audiences, at various times and places, perceive the writer to have meant—not so simple.

In addition to contextual variations in meaning, individual word meanings, idioms, and colloquial expressions proliferate in every language from day to day, and disappear at roughly the same rate.

Computer translation designers assumed that in specialized areas with limited vocabularies, everyone more or less understands everyone else. They had the computer translate articles from scientific specialties, such as neurosurgery, in a crude style. Constant and uneven changes in each language and culture, however, prevented the production of any intelligible translation without exhaustive editing by someone both bilingual and skilled in the specialization involved.

Again, variations in meaning were the impediments. The expensive effort in several nations failed to produce a usable language translation system. The most complex entity humans have evolved is language. Nevertheless, most humans simply take language for granted, at face value—often to their eventual regret.

One additional factor must be included in any attempt to describe the process of reality perception—time. Perception must involve a time continuum. The earlier slice of chocolate cake—the real slice, not the pictorial version in figure 6—endured continuous change throughout its existence. It is not the same cake slice today that it was a day, week, or month ago. Any valid perceptual evaluation of the cake slice should include a valid time reference. In other words, any meaningful reference to the cake slice should include time, place, perspective, associations at both conscious and unconscious levels, and information about observer biases. Chocolate-addicted individuals are known to perceive chocolate cake differently than the nonaddicted. Hungry individuals will perceive the cake slice quite differently from others who have just eaten. Nevertheless, regardless of how detailed the verbal or pictorial description becomes, the word symbols can never approximate the complex multilevel perceivable reality.

Our perception of the cake slice may never involve life-or-death questions. But what about such perceptual realities as capitalism, socialism, love, hate, freedom, slavery, loyalty, environment, or people? Such subjective verbal and pictorial concepts—high-order abstractions—can be described only by other words. The mounting pile of descriptive definitions takes us further and further away from verifiable reality. Individuals continue to stumble about in a dense verbal, intellectual fog, attempting to confirm increasingly vague or ephemeral perceptual fantasies based upon fantasies, based upon fantasies, et cetera.

## Uncommon Common Sense

From Euclid to Descartes, through Newton to Einstein, traditional modes of thought were based upon three-dimensional space perceptions: height, width, and depth, coupled with movements of time. This simplistic way of thinking is often called "common sense." For most societies of our day, common sense provides the basic scientific and social reality constructions. *Common sense* usually appears constant, reliable, simple, and noncontradictory—a model of linear cause-and-effect relationships. Yet the real world—outside the limitations of human perception—appears to be not at all like our fantasies of a neat, orderly, logical, predictable, and describable perception.

New words, phrases, verbal concepts, and meanings—collectively utilized to express *common sense*—constantly enter the language via the work of skilled word merchants. Language innovation is not a product of the general population. H. L. Mencken, in his exhaustive *The American Language*, called these innovators "the writing men." Curiously, women—though this may be changing in the technologically advanced nations—have so far played a minor role in the creation of new language. Coiners of language include novelists, storytellers, dramatists, lyricists, playwrights, journalists, and most importantly ad copywriters. Word merchants' phrases usually enter the language inconspicuously. The writer is anonymous or soon forgotten; the words remain indefinitely.

The \$150 billion ad expenditure in 1989—only one year's investment—introduced scores of new words, phrases, and meanings into the language. Some of these quickly disappeared; others will persist indefinitely. Anyone who sponsors new language inputs in effect controls language definitions and meanings. Most importantly, the way *meaning* itself is defined is controllable at both conscious and unconscious levels of audience perception. Most of the gifted word and phrase makers in the U.S. work, in one way or another, for the ad industry. Entertainment industries are heavily integrated with corporate ad and promotion interests. Ad media can exploit a writer's work, or they can ignore it when their vested

interests are threatened. The ad industry has a powerful investment in language, in how it is utilized, and in controlled interpretations of meaning. Ad media provide a language-culture machine for society.

The frailty and vulnerability of human perception and language has been widely recognized by philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists at least since the Greek sophists. In the U.S. today, quite unlike many other nations or cultures, the relationship between words and the perceptual realities they propose to describe is ignored. People have been conditioned to accept mindlessly word or picture symbols as realities—even when they lack any conceivable relationship to perceivable reality. Ads supply the model for language. Ad lingo conveys nothing verifiable or specific. Everything is sustained in the realm of fantasy projection, identification between vaguely eroticized products, consumed by people presented as stereotypical images. Questions about perceptual bias and *meaning* versus *reality* rarely appear. Critical evaluations of *meaning* in the *macro-micro-submicro* perceptual levels are either attacked as subversive or, worse, ignored as pedantic.

Over 2,000 years ago, Plato advised the rulers of his *Republic* to seek control of the popular idiom as the first strategy of political and economic domination. Human populations can be unconsciously (subliminally) conditioned to any desired design. With currently available technology, this requires merely an expenditure of enough time, money, and human resources. Each year, U.S. audiences observe individuals who literally *buy*—through ad media—elections, public support, consumer expenditures, and national as well as international public policies. The heaviest ad appropriation usually wins; not always, of course, but often enough to make such investment a cost-effective technique for the engineering of public consent. Then, most frighteningly, everyone pretends that they thought out their behavior all on their own and were not bought and sold by clever manipulators.

Advertising provides a near perfect stimulus-response-reward system, even though the rewards are more symbolic than real. The eventual outcome, however, appears much closer to the nightmare of Dante's *Inferno* than to an idyllic utopia. At its present level of development, media technology could make the world and its

peoples into virtually anything. The U.S. has cleverly persuaded itself, however, to use this technology to turn its culture into an enormous vending machine that exists because it consumes.

Those who understand the limitations of language and perceptions can accept responsibility for their own reality definitions. They can avoid or reduce vulnerability to manipulation. They can achieve autonomy as individuals. And they can truly realize their vast potential for growth, dignity, and achievement. The trouble is that most would rather follow the herd, accept the ready-to-wear perceptions of leaders and media who pursue only their own selfish interests.

## 5 | HOW WE KNOW THAT WE KNOW THAT WE KNOW

To think is to differ!

Clarence Darrow, from the Scopes Trial transcripts

A civilization or individual who cannot burst through its current abstractions is doomed to sterility after a very limited period of progress. Almost any idea which jogs you out of your current abstractions may be better than nothing.

Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*

Common sense must be jarred into uncommon sense. A major service mathematics rendered humanity over the past century was to put “common sense” where it belongs, on the topmost shelf next to the dusty bottle labeled “Discarded Nonsense.”

Eric T. Bell, *The Principle of General Relativity*

Human language usually appears so simple, logical, reasonable, and natural that most of us take it for granted. We rarely question how perceptions of the world process into language and how language affects behaviors; or the ways language determines how and what we think we think. In the mass-media managed societies, individuals are relentlessly harassed through the language of words and pictures. Every waking moment—and through dreams, every sleeping moment—has been targeted by the ad media. Most North Americans appear consciously unaware of media intrusions into their lives.

Western tourists in the U.S.S.R. are culture-shocked by a sudden awareness that something is missing. Soviets are not subjected to all-pervasive media demands on every waking moment. Do you wonder which society is the most relentlessly brainwashed? The question is academic. Both are deeply immersed in manipulative media that manufacture contemporary culture. Soviet media are simply less obvious.

U.S. education has moved away from the liberal arts ideals of thirty-five years ago, when the goal was an autonomous, spirited, critical, intellectual perspective. Education was considered a path to full, rich, more meaningful life experiences. Students were expected to comprehend relative modes of thought and evaluation, and the emphasis was on learning to think critically, rather than learning *what* to think. Students are now exhaustively propagandized, taught to fit into perceived contemporary realities, adapt, adjust, and accept conventional wisdoms of the moment. Great emphasis is placed on vocational fantasies about high-paid employment.

Business schools, with roughly 25% of U.S. undergraduate enrollments, legitimize business. They rationalize greed and profit as ends in themselves with a frankness that would have embarrassed Al Capone. Strangely, however, they provide little of the basic, intellectual education that might prepare an ambitious, creative entrepreneur. When entrepreneurial types find their way into business schools, they usually quit from boredom. Similarly, communication schools legitimize and romanticize the mass-communication industry. With endless courses of vague, fact-deficient generalities, they provide little education about language, thought, and behavior—the ultimate considerations in human communication. Young

people are indoctrinated for a place on the endless belts that carry them as marketing statistics in and out of countless shopping centers as they process through life. *I consume, therefore I exist*, or vice versa, becomes the philosophical premise upon which much of life is predicated.

Techniques for critical language analysis are available. They could provide the intellectual toughness to defend against verbal manipulation, to discriminate between fantasy and reality. But the language system to which most individuals are educated ensures they will become both victims and victimizers with little awareness that anything out of the ordinary is going on.

### The Logic of Illogic

The language system we live with was actually designed by a Greek scholar around 350 b.c. Few people today know or care much about Aristotle. Unconsciously, however, the U.S. population remains victim to rules of thought he worked out over 2,000 years ago. His rules still govern the ways perceptions are described and assumptions are expressed, in words, pictures, and simple mathematics. The mathematics-based languages of science generally discarded Aristotelian logic almost a century ago. For the average citizen, however, the old language logic still provides an integrated, largely unconscious structure through which humans submit themselves to control and manipulation. Aristotle apparently thought he was merely describing the language system of his time. But over the centuries, his system was useful to those who controlled societies and came to be perceived as actual rules of thought—the way the brain thinks, the way language works, even the way God intended humans to reason.

Language structure exerts a powerful subliminal influence upon human life. For the individual, however, who is part of the language-cultural system, the whole thing appears natural and reasonable. Few question the system; few even know a system exists. From within the system, any critique does little but reconfirm the system's perfection, logic, reason, and truths.

A prolific scholar, Aristotle described the way language appeared to work in three fundamental laws of thought: *identity*, the *excluded*

*middle*, and *contradiction*. His genius lay in an ability to describe a linguistic system that appeared neat, reliable, ordered, and verbally definable—a system that could be verified internally. Aristotle's system was later integrated from ancient Greek into most of the language cultures of the Western world. His three laws made logical sense. They established and legitimized—for over two millennia—the ways in which language, thought, and logic would be accepted and applied. Anyone who questioned, disputed, or contradicted the system was socially excluded, imprisoned, executed as a heretic or subversive, or all three. Aristotelian logic is still defended by those whose vested interests might be threatened by another language system more consistent with the progress experienced in the natural and physical sciences over the past century.

Scientist-mathematician-philosopher Alfred Korzybski was one who attempted to apply scientific principles to verbal language. His principal work, Science and Sanity (1933), is still one of the most important attempts to examine how Aristotelian structures had locked Western civilization into a primitive, restrictive, destructive system of language logic. He explored ways in which contemporary scientific notions could be expanded to include the social and linguistic sciences. Korzybski was bitterly denounced in the Soviet Encyclopedia of Science. Though initially given serious attention in the U.S., he was soon angrily censured by those with vested interest in the linguistic status quo. His attempt to evolve a sane, nonexploitative language system threatened those who depended upon myth, magic, and fraud.

S. I. Hayakawa, later a U.S. senator, was an early student of Korzybskian semantics. Numerous ad executives, however, became intrigued with non-Aristotelian logic. It offered them a perspective—a key, in effect—with which consumer perceptions could be more effectively manipulated. Pierre Martineau, Chicago Tribune ad director, was one of the earliest to utilize the new logic in marketing strategies. Korzybski hoped for a language system to protect individuals from language exploitation. The system became most useful to those doing the exploiting.

The three basic Aristotelian Laws are simple. They offer a psycholinguistic structure for logic and reason, and impose an illusion of order upon language and its applications. This assumes,

of course, that everyone knows, understands, and accepts them. The trouble with rules, of course, is that once they are imposed and more or less accepted, clever people will exhaust every possibility to discover ways in which the laws can be manipulated, circumvented, and disregarded.

A history of laws would make for very dull reading. A history of how civilizations violated, circumvented, or adapted their laws for greed, power, and profit would be fascinating—though likely subversive. Today, Aristotelian laws prevail in the verbal definition-oriented sciences. Once people are persuaded or coerced into accepting the laws of a system, those who thoroughly understand them can manipulate trusting believers in any direction desired.

Judicial rules throughout the Western world provide excellent examples of Aristotelian logic. The search to determine guilt or innocence through words provides more-or-less gainful employment for armies of legal professionals. The U.S. has more statute laws than the rest of the world put together. One might conclude that all dilemmas were resolved by this mountain of verbal prohibitions and definitions. Thousands, however, dedicate their lives to the discovery of exclusions, contradictions, loopholes, and errors. This proliferation of laws has often created more problems than were resolved. Attempts to reconcile human dilemmas only with words are doomed from the beginning. If humans do not really desire solutions to problems, a mountain of words will make little difference.

Aristotle's contribution to the study of language was truly extraordinary for his time. Left alone, his logic would have undergone a natural evolution, along with science, technology, and civilization. Unfortunately, his ideas served the structures of power and profit too well. They were assimilated by scholastic philosophy during the Middle Ages and ultimately enforced as church doctrine by the Inquisition. Even after the Reformation, Aristotelian laws survived and continued to dominate Western thought and language.

Science and technology finally broke free of Aristotle in the early twentieth century, primarily through mathematics. A handful of sophisticated mathematicians and physicists skilled in the new areas of relativity and quantum mechanics rapidly moved science out of the dark ages where creative insights into perceptions had been theologically suppressed. Once the logic of Aristotle, the

geometry of Euclid, and the physics of Newton were set aside, scientific progress could no longer be restrained. The verbal-pictorial-oriented sciences, however, remained entrapped in Aristotelian logic.

Euclidean geometry, for example, became a typical victim of progress. Euclid's proofs, like Aristotle's, were constructed from human language—verbal, mathematical, and algebraic—and depended upon verbal/pictorial language, with pitfalls, fallacies, and hidden structural weaknesses.

Every word or picture has both a *meaning* and *definition*, though the two are rarely congruent. The more frequently used, the more varied, complex, and contradictory meaning becomes. Definitions are constantly changing. Actual word or picture symbol usage is also guided more by unconscious than conscious associations. Euclid's definitions, as he initially appeared to intend them—his axioms, postulates, definitions of point, straight line, circle, triangle, et cetera—began to erode, modify, expand, constantly evolving first in subtle, then in major ways. After 2,100 years, non-Euclidean geometry appeared in 1823 and continues to develop. Euclidean geometry became only a historical footnote read briefly during one's early mathematical education. Newtonian physics similarly disappeared in the face of relativity and quantum theories. Euclid and Newton fell, not painlessly but quickly.

Aristotle's laws, on the other hand, have hung on tenaciously and continue to rule broad areas of popular thought, legal doctrine, and the so-called social and behavioral sciences. They persist like an intellectual vise clamped tightly around the minds of millions. These laws govern the ways humans both *know* and *don't know*—repress information that is not verbally definable in any relationship with reality.

The best way to use and misuse any language system is to approach it from the outside, from a counter-system. This strategy has not been overlooked by the media industries, especially those involved with mass communication—advertising and public relations. Anyone skilled in the use of Aristotelian logic, and its non-Aristotelian counterlogic, can easily manipulate value systems, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and behaviors. In this light, let's examine Aristotle's three laws one by one.

## The Logic of Identification

The law of identity is often summarized by the phrase, "Whatever is, is!" For over 2,000 years, the concept has been directly responsible for a disaster of confusion and endless human quandaries. Words are never the things they describe. Maps are not the territories or perceptual realities they represent. A picture is not what is described in the picture. Interpretations and verbal descriptions of reality are only interpretations and descriptions, not reality. Aristotle believed words or symbols were identifiable with people and things. Non-Aristotelians demonstrated that words and symbols were merely vague, approximate abstractions—having little to do with actual perceivable realities. Recall the earlier consideration of *macro*, *micro*, and *submicro* levels of perception.

The fallacy of *identification* can be demonstrated by any of the subjects portrayed in the illustrations. The Seagram's Crown Royal broken bottle (fig. 15) would have us perceive and identify the broken bottle with the real thing. Most do! Studies of the ad revealed that nearly everyone considered the picture an actual broken bottle. It is not! Take an empty liquor bottle and break it upon a hard surface. The resulting pattern of shattered bottle parts and glass splinters will look *nothing* like what is portrayed in the ad. The ad bottle is an expensive painting. Several artists, who do comparable work for advertisers, estimated the painting to be worth \$40,000 to \$50,000. A photograph of a broken bottle could have been made for around \$100 but would not have sold the product. Photographs and paintings are perceived from a specific point, stopped in space and time, time-stopped at a particular instant. Reality, and our perceptions of reality, exist in a constant state of process and change.

Even at this remarkable fee, the artist may have been underpaid considering the amount of whiskey the ad must have sold over the years it was frequently published. It first appeared in 1971 and was still in use in 1987. An estimated \$12 million of marketing capital was invested to purchase media space for the broken bottle. The ad appeared repeatedly in every national magazine in the

U.S., and was translated into other languages and published internationally. The \$12 million painting of a broken whiskey bottle was able to sell several hundred million dollars worth of alcoholic beverages.

A second type of identification proposed in the ad involves the caption, "Have you ever seen a grown man cry?" The logical Aristotelian identification would be that the "grown man" was crying over the broken bottle and wasted alcohol. But the statement is illogical. Only a pathetic alcoholic would cry over the broken bottle, assuming *cry* refers to tears rather than a cry of pain. Virtually all the consumers who perceived the ad did, however, make the appropriate, predictable, Aristotelian identification—as they had been culturally conditioned to do—between pictures, words, and the reality supposedly represented. They perceived the ad much like unthinking robots operated by electronic computer programs. They did and thought precisely what they were supposed to do and think, according to conventional wisdom and Aristotle's law of identity.

Were anyone to question the broken bottle ad from a non-Aristotelian point of view, it would instantly be exposed as a lie expensively designed to entrap consumers in alcohol consumption—a fraud, a flimflam, a deception, a manipulation of consumer gullibility. The ad was designed to be mindlessly absorbed in the consumer's instantaneous perception. Like most ads, the broken bottle was not designed for conscious perception, which does not affect consumer behavior.

Alcohol spirit manufacturers invest roughly 6% of their gross receipts in ads, according to the Department of Commerce. This is an extremely high ad-investment level. At a cost of \$12 million, this ad—in order to break even—would need to sell well over \$200 million worth of Crown Royal at the wholesale level. Nobody breaks even and stays in business long, so this sales estimate is conservative.

Several years ago, I was interviewed on a religious TV program hosted by Pat Robertson. We looked at a copy of the broken bottle ad with an eye to discovering what made the ad work.

Study the ad carefully at this point. Look for anything that suggests devious intent. Remember, most ads are designed to be perceived in a second or two. Do you perceive or feel anything

peculiar about the ad? Robertson discovered several embeds painted into the broken bottle, though he appeared to perceive the picture as an actual broken bottle. He pointed out the swan's head and neck (fig. 41), the bird (fig. 42), the screaming man (fig. 43), and the silhouette of a Roman soldier (fig. 44).

During the interview, additional embeds were demonstrated: the angel in the bottleneck (fig. 45), faces (fig. 46 and 47), and an ax or cutting instrument (fig. 48). Perhaps the ax broke the bottle to liberate the angel in the bottleneck. Ads do not have to be logical at the unconscious perceptual level. I turned the ad on its left side to simplify perception of the profile of a cartoon face embedded in the broken bottle (fig. 49)—the round black nose, forehead, an eye above the nose, the back of the head curving down to the neck. The ax (fig. 48) forms an elongated lower jaw below the open mouth.

Just below the profile's upper lip, a stub hangs down from the ground area. The stub appears to have been bitten off by the open mouth. The rest of it appears falling below the jaw, having just been castrated (fig. 50). "Have you ever seen a grown man cry?" Indeed! The caption takes on an entirely new dimension, but one unconsciously invisible under Aristotle's law of identity. Identification locks the viewer into a specific set of perceptual expectations. When you unthinkingly or uncritically identify words with words, words with pictures, or words and pictures with things or people, you have been victimized. The *law of identity* has served the power elite and its institutions for well over 2,000 years. Until ad technicians learned to think around Aristotle, they could not have worked out the successful flimflam.

"Have you ever seen a grown man cry?" is a poetic scam. The tears are not for the broken bottle, but for what was within the broken bottle—a castrated penis. Ad agency researchers well know that substantial quantities of alcohol are consumed as a means of sex or intimacy avoidance. Alcohol is one of the greatest enemies of sex man has invented—a few ounces in the blood destroys sexual ability, even if it engenders virile fantasies. Castration themes are frequently found in alcohol, tobacco, and drug ads. (See Key, *Clam-Plate Orgy*, figs. 5 to 19; Key, *Media Sexploitation*, figs. 35 to 37; and Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, figs. 16 and 17.)

Alcohol ads are not directed at mere drinkers. They are aimed

at *heavy* and *very heavy* drinkers. Ads are tested against these special consumers before large media investments are justified. These "heavies" consume inordinate quantities of alcohol and also serve as leaders among drinkers for instilling brand preferences. Want to know a good Scotch? Ask someone who drinks a lot of it.

### The Self-Destruct in Alcohol Ads

Death or self-destructive imagery is a frequent aspect of subliminal content. Advertisers of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs know that subliminal death imagery sells the brand and product. Ad effectiveness is an empirical, measurable quality. *Why* death sells is impossible to answer, except in theory; no one knows, as yet, how the brain functions. Death-oriented embeds are rarely found in food ads, though one could certainly argue that compulsive eating is a self-destructive syndrome. If death sold food at the subliminal level, ad agencies would certainly use it.

The so-called death wish, the unconscious compulsion to self-destruct, is a part of every human psyche. In the Seagram's ad, death is symbolized by self-castration. The death wish idea dates at least to Thomas Hobbes, a mid-sixteenth-century British philosopher. The theory was further developed around Thanatos, the personification of death from Greek mythology, by Sigmund Freud. Humans often exhibit a predisposition to destroy themselves, either actually or symbolically. The tendency is more pronounced in some individuals at certain periods of their lives, but appears common to all. Self-destructive behaviors—which include drug abuse and addiction—are visibly rampant phenomena, especially among young people. Suicide, of course, has reached epidemic proportions in the U.S. It is presently the second most frequent cause of death among teenagers (the first being accidents, many of which suggest suicide).

Millions of dollars are spent by major corporations to exploit consumers' self-destructive compulsions. Few families today have not been hurt by alcohol abuse and addiction. Alcohol kills at least half the victims involved in fatal auto accidents and suicides and

is directly responsible for unmeasurable human suffering. It is a factor in most wife- and child-abuse cases, crime, unemployment and unemployability, and in an extensive range of medical pathologies. In spite of this, alcoholic-beverage ads totaled well over a billion dollars in 1987. This most profitable industry has ignored the public welfare in favor of financial gain. The alcohol ads illustrated are certainly immoral, and appear to be illegal, according to the unenforced U.S. Treasury (ATF) ruling (see Appendix). Legislators still find excuses to ignore the issue.

Conscious and unconscious identification erodes an individual's ability to discriminate between fantasy and reality. The fantasies become more real, more vivid, more lifelike, more desirable than reality. The reality of alcohol consumption is hidden carefully behind the fantasies—an emerald, a broken bottle, happy athletes joking over their light beer, the sophisticated sexualized model sipping liqueurs, all appear far more real than reality, which, as far as the alcoholic is concerned, can be pretty grim. Of course, there is no immediate need to think about it—until the drinker winds up in a treatment program. A major objective of advertising is to ensure that consumers never think about the black side, consciously at least.

When fantasies completely replace realities, when individuals make uncontrollable identifications between symbols and things or people, they can be clinically diagnosed as schizophrenic. Most of the U.S. population identifies the cleverly contrived illustrations in ads with the real thing. Few consumers even suspected the Seagram's broken bottle was not a real broken bottle, the Betty Crocker chocolate cake had nothing to do with cake, the hands pouring Chivas Regal were not real hands. Consumers appear incapable of discriminating between fantasy and reality. The problem of fantasy versus reality is far more significant than obscene imagery embedded in ads. Advertising and sales hype provide an educational system. In high-technology cultures, an individual learns far more about the world from ad media than from schools. Much of U.S. formal education, for example, has degenerated into training in perceptual repression, indoctrination into the way we wish the world were structured, rather than in a creative search for reality-oriented perceptual experiences.

Anyone who uncritically accepts symbols, words, or pictures as the "real thing" cannot avoid being led down the perceptual garden path. Likewise, anyone who unthinkingly patterns their values and identity upon verbal and pictorial symbols is being manipulated and exploited. Media operate in behalf of commercial objectives to establish perceptual structures for audiences to bring about unchallenged identifications between symbols and realities. *Real* and *natural* usually turn out to be fake—*unreal* and *unnatural*, simply a manipulation of symbols and those who take them seriously. Coca-Cola, a totally synthetic substance, is not *the real thing*. The cosmetic *natural look* requires more cosmetics than the cosmeticized look.

Identification works on the premise that words, symbols, and objects are directly comparable, that there is an appropriate specific word or picture for every reality, that word definitions held by others are identical to those held by ourselves. Each of these three assumptions about symbols is false, both on the street and in science.

Through identification, an individual unconsciously accepts that verbal or pictorial statements are accurate, concrete, all-inclusive representations of *truth*. The word or picture tells it all! Physicist Eric Bell once commented, "The wretched monosyllable 'all' caused mathematicians more trouble than all the rest of the dictionary." Nothing verbal, pictorial, or mathematical is ever *all*-inclusive. Verbal or pictorial statements cannot be more than abstract, remote, simplistic symbols that attempt to describe only a partially perceived reality. Both observers and what is observed exist in states of process and change that may consciously be imperceptible. Unbelievably destructive and psychopathic behaviors have been imposed upon civilization from verbal, all-inclusive, dogmatic, absolute, and blind unreasoning acceptance of the word. A long, cruel, and bloody history evolved over the *true* meanings of words. The devastation promises insanely to continue.

Humans are often entrapped by symbols and perceived meanings. There appears no escape—at least no escape until the Aristotelian Laws are eventually repealed, when individuals decide they have had enough.

## Where Dirty Words Hide

During a lecture, this author once introduced the law of identity by printing on the blackboard in large capital letters, "FUCK IT!" I then turned and smiled enigmatically while the class became increasingly disturbed. A few giggled and worked themselves toward amused hysteria. Some blushed, well-scrubbed faces glowing with embarrassed flushes. Others paled, their lips thinned, jaws tensed. Several arranged books as though anticipating a walk-out.

"What's the problem?" I finally asked pleasantly.

"That dirty word you wrote on the blackboard," someone eventually replied.

"Dirty word?" I touched one of the letters on the board and examined the chalk dust on my fingers. "You're putting me on," I said. "These are only chalk particles on the graphite surface of a blackboard. Dusty, perhaps, but there is nothing here that appears dirty. Why are most of you bright, literate people emotionally reacting over mere chalk embedded in a graphite surface?" I asked.

There was, of course, nothing wrong with the symbol on the blackboard. The "dirtiness" was in their heads, not in the phrase. *FUCK IT!* is only a symbol for a rather complex reality. There exist at least half a dozen possible interpretations that might have been made of the phrase, only a couple of which relate to the reproductive process. In any respect, the word symbol was only that—a symbol, albeit a complex symbol, a high-order abstraction only definable through other verbal abstractions.

Every atom, molecule, organism, personality, language, and society is a novelty—a constantly changing novelty. Language categorizations, or the perceptions that result from them, are fantasies and illusions of the first order. They may be useful from time to time, but they remain fantasies.

For example, the words *love* or *god* to one individual will mean something both similar to and different from what they mean to another. It is curious when people insist their definitions are "true," and compel others to validate their fantasies. The infinite possible meanings in such words can be fun—an aesthetic, stimulating experience, as the poets discovered. The inherent verbal uncertainties could provide an extraordinary incentive to expand and

deepen knowledge of the world, people, and the languages humans use to communicate. It does not, as most well know, work this way.

There is, for example, a remote, abstract distance between the word labels *love* and *god* and any specific reality. Realities represented by words such as these can be described only through other verbal symbols. Meaning cannot be demonstrated by simply pointing at the reality represented, as in the abstraction *chocolate cake*. *Love* and *god* might be called high-order abstractions in comparison with low-order symbols such as *cake*, *chair*, *dish*, *book*, etc. High-order abstractions lead to devastating quandaries as humans endlessly attempt to verbally define them, in a delusional search for permanence, security, and some guarantee in which to believe. High-order abstractions can be defined or explained only by other words—often additional high-order abstractions—resulting in fantasies built upon fantasies built upon fantasies, et cetera.

In a provocative attempt to satirize Aristotelian logic, a brilliant seventeenth-century Mexican nun, Sister Juana Inéz de la Cruz, wrote a philosophical treatise that proved, beyond any doubt, how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. Church authorities and the Inquisition suspected they were being ridiculed but found her impossible to refute by the rules of language. Who could attack someone who so fervently believed in angels? Though the book was humorous, the argument that is still with us is really not. Daily news stories argue over how much national security can dance on the head of an MX missile or inside the fantasized Strategic Defense Initiative. Such arguments in support of profit and power are silly but highly dangerous when taken seriously.

High-order abstractions can be productively utilized, but only when they can be confirmed and tentatively validated by reality-oriented perceptions. They can be responsible for deep philosophical and poetic insights—vital to the enrichment of life and thought. But wide areas of human vulnerability to exploitation surround the use, or misuse, of high-order abstractions. Consider how many words have been written to define variant meanings of *love* and *god* and how many people have been slaughtered over the definitions. The world might have been enriched by an acceptance of multiple interpretations, had anyone thought about it.

Verbal or pictorial descriptions have the same relationship to

reality that an ad has to the product it invariably misrepresents. Conscious or unconscious motives will always stack the perceptual deck with both seen and unseen bias. The concept of *truth*, were it actually to exist, could never be described through words or pictures, not even through mathematics. *Truth* exists only in reality, outside the symbols that attempt to describe it. *Truth* would also have to be free from human perceptual intervention and influence—a paradoxical impossibility.

### Times, Places, and Situations

Though words can never *be* things or people, the accuracy of language to describe reality could be improved. Individuals could be trained to index meanings to specific times, places, and situations, which would substantially reduce their vulnerability to manipulation. For example, consider the recent ad on the back cover of *Time* magazine (fig. 51), “Here’s to more gin taste!” The illustration depicts a female hand toasting a phallic bottle of Gilbey’s gin. “Here’s” is an idiom signifying a toast or salutation usually directed at another human. Readers have a right to question whether reasonable behavior could include a discussion with a gin bottle, comparable to a conversation with a door, house, or frying pan. Such anthropomorphic projection, though widely utilized in expensive ad campaigns, in this case seriously toasts an inanimate gin bottle. Such fantasization should easily get the drinker a spot on a psychiatrist’s couch. A simple analysis, such as that suggested above, might include the questions *when* someone might use such a phrase, *where*, and in *what* conceivable situation? The only reasonable answer would be never, nowhere, and only in the case of a blind drunk mumbling meaningless gibberish.

Similarly, “more gin taste” is another clever phrase that means absolutely nothing in terms of reality. As the glass in the ad is full of ice cubes, the temperature of the liquid is presumably low—roughly 40° Fahrenheit. Lowered temperatures sharply reduce the ability to distinguish flavor—if, indeed, flavor is what “taste” refers to. The words *taste* and *testes* associate at the unconscious level and have a phonetic similarity that often stimulates identification. Even at room temperatures, however, taste tests demonstrate that sta-

tistical majorities of people cannot determine the brand of gin they are drinking. Furthermore, when drinkers cannot smell, most cannot determine whether they are drinking gin, vodka, or whiskey.

Again—*when, in which place, in what situations?* Answer: Never! Nowhere! And only in conversation with a fool or someone also blind drunk! The ad copy line, of course, is meant to be read at the undiscriminating, unconscious level of perception, thus, taken for granted. Like most alcoholic beverage ads, it is also directed specifically toward *heavy* drinkers in debt to alcohol for helping them escape reality. Enough people identify with anthropomorphic verbal nonsense to make such ads profitable to everyone involved with their publication. The message succeeds because consumers do not pay critical, conscious attention; they shrug off the absurdity, and go about drinking as though they really thought for themselves.

The Gilbey's gin toast ad is, of course, a painting. The woman's hand, martini, olive, gin, glass, and the bottle are painted fantasies, having nothing to do with reality. In figure 51, several of the embedded *SEXes* have been inked in and numerous others can be discovered by perceptive readers. On the seemingly turbulent surface of the martini, at least five monsters have been airbrushed into the bubbles, grotesque faces floating, perhaps drowning, in the delusion. View the detail illustration (fig. 52) from different perspectives—left, right, upside down—for a preview of what may lie ahead in the lives of heavy drinkers. Repetitious use of the meaningless word *taste* in the bottom ad copy promises to drive away the alcoholic's goblins.

Another major problem stemming from the *identity* law occurs when the subject of a sentence is consciously or unconsciously identified with the predicate, usually via the verb *to be*. In the phrase, "Ronnie is a communist!" *is* implies a fixed entity, unchanging and inflexible. A reality evaluation is needed to explore *Ronnie* as to time, place, and situation. *Ronnie*, like all humans, has changed throughout his life. Change occurs biologically and psychologically at every moment in time. *Ronnie* is a different person at sixty than he was yesterday, last year, at twenty-five, forty, or will be at sixty-five. To have any validity, the sentence must specify at which particular age, where he lived at that time, and the conditions under which he lived.

Hypothetically, assume that *Ronnie*, whoever he may be, has lived since birth in numerous languages, cultures, and political-economic systems. He has been deeply involved with various sociopolitical struggles. Which of the infinitely many possible *Ronnies* are we trying to describe?

Another largely unconscious dimension of *Ronnie* is in identifications made with other *Ronnies*, known or imagined. Even though *Ronnie* is only a hypothetical person, merely an arrangement of syllables, most individuals could describe a *Ronnie* they carry around in their heads—a *Ronnie* quite different from *Algernon, Prince, John, or Buboobla*. Every name, even a nonsense name, has significance at both conscious and unconscious levels—as every ad copywriter well knows.

Similarly, *communist* is another meaningless term—though highly useful as a propaganda device among individuals trained not to think beyond stereotypical labels. Communists display an astonishing variability, and always have, even though you may never have heard about it—left-wing, right-wing, centrist, and countless degrees in between. There are currently over forty varieties of communist-socialist groups visible in the world and certainly a great many more invisible splinter groups. Some of these varieties—Yugoslavian and Chinese, at the moment—are socially acceptable to the capitalist world. Communists have always differed in various cultures, at different times, and under different situations.

Stereotyping *communists* is about as meaningless a preoccupation as stereotyping capitalists, Republicans, Jews, Catholics, or visitors at Disneyland. Such stereotypes may be meaningless, but they are often useful. Few politicians could survive if their mothers had not allowed them as children to play with stereotypes, if their unthinking followers could tell the difference between nonsense labels and the complex perceptual realities involved. Both the subject and predicate of our sentence—"Ronnie is a communist!"—proved to be verbal fictions. The most devastating misevaluations in language have grown out of an uncritical use of the verb *to be*. *I am, he is, we are, you are, and they are* imply permanence, a rigid, fixed connection between subject and predicate. *Ronnie* (the subject) was connected to *communist* (the predicate)—a verbal fiction

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uniting two verbal, stereotypical fictional concepts—a fiction of a fiction of a fiction, et cetera.

The little word *is* (a conjugation of *to be*) has its tragedies. *Is* marries and identifies things and people that are not really related. The marriage is an illusion of language structure and the invisible, unconscious human perceptual process. Though the problems of identity appear common to most language systems, those surrounding the verb *to be* may be of a lesser magnitude in some. Latin languages have two verb forms for *to be*—one denoting permanence, the other a transition verb for a *temporary* condition, time, or status. In Spanish, for example, *es muerto*—“he is dead”—describes a permanent condition (even in a Catholic country), while *está enfermo*—“he is sick”—denotes a temporary condition. In English, however, there is often neither conscious nor unconscious recognition of transitory conditions.

When something or somebody *is*, it *is* presumably forever, welding subject and predicate together. When a Chevrolet Nova ad tells us “It is the best of both worlds,” the statement is nonsense in any relationship with perceivable reality. But it is carefully conceived nonsense designed to persuade naïve, uncritical individuals that something of significance has been communicated. The subject “It,” of course, refers to all the Novas ever manufactured, even those considered lemons by their owners. *It* is also a frequent ad euphemism for sex. In the ad, the Nova has been manipulated to appear as a long, phallic, powerful symbol of authority.

The words “the best” are—at best—a meaningless adjectival description. The best for what, at which times, under what conditions, in comparison with whom or what? The phrase, “of both worlds” alludes, in this case, to the U.S. and Japan; the car is apparently a joint venture between General Motors and Toyota. Of course, by projection, “both worlds” may imply that one of the worlds is in outer space—the painted illustration of the Nova does suggest a space-ship design. A *nova*, of course, is a star that suddenly brightens, then in a short time dims. If you think about it, as few consumers ever learned to do, *novas* may not last very long. Ads depend on human gullibility and ignorance.

Nova’s ad strategy was designed to counter growing resentment against imported cars. Imports have cost tens of thousands of U.S. workers their jobs, but the prejudice is ambivalent, as Japanese

cars are generally considered cheaper, better quality, and more dependable than American cars. The negative U.S. auto image is especially strong among the lower socioeconomic consumers who are the major Nova market.

Again, the Nova ad copy—like the painted illustration—is unadulterated nonsense, designed to move trusting, uncritical readers into an unconscious identification between Nova and “the best.”

Anyone who identifies the broken Crown Royal bottle (fig. 15) with an actual broken bottle has projected a fantasy. The bottle in the painting clearly has nothing to do with an actual broken bottle. Similarly the Gaddafi portrait on *Time* magazine’s cover (fig. 9)—as well as other illustration content—has nothing to do with reality.

In summary, identifications work in two ways—between words and words (symbols matched with symbols) and between words and things or people (symbols matched with perceptions of reality). Both are far removed from any describable reality at a specific time, place, or situation. Such identifications ignore process and change in both perceivers and their perceptions. Regardless of what we allege something or someone *is*, the thing or person is never the words or pictures we use to describe our perceptions.

### Animals and Things Are Not Human

Anthropomorphic identification of human qualities with objects or animals is an ancient technique of mind management to which millions are highly vulnerable, especially in ad-managed cultures. Anthropomorphism is often engineered to sell automobiles, for example, by suggesting in body design and ads that cars possess human, even superhuman attributes. Several Cadillac models, for example, had mammary-shaped spheres on both front and rear bumpers. No human female is so abundantly equipped. The masculine-designed Mustang competed with the feminine-designed Camaro in the early years of the two models. As time passed, however, gender became less distinguishable. Such manipulations are far less successful in European and Asian cultures, where people tend to perceive correctly that automobiles are only inanimate machines.

It is no random accident that most U.S. presidents have pet dogs

in the White House, at considerable taxpayer expense for damaged rugs, furniture, and draperies. Consciously and unconsciously, the presence of a loving, obedient, trusting dog produces a positive image of the owner. The president must have a dog. Voters would reject a politician who preferred cats, pigs, boa constrictors, or chimpanzees.

Used-car pitchmen, comedians, and others who solicit the public trust long ago integrated animals into their acts. Who could not trust a man who loved animals? In reality, anyone who uses animals to enhance pretensions of honesty, kindness, and trustworthiness can only be a con artist, profitably exploiting the con in confidence. Asians make endless jokes about North Americans with their dogs and cats. In the real world, where most humans survive on the edge of starvation, the food and affection lavished upon pets in the U.S. would nourish millions. Perhaps everyone should be frequently reminded that both Genghis Khan and Ivan the Terrible were animal lovers.

### The Logic of Excluded Middles

The *law of the excluded middle* was one of Aristotle's more imaginative ideas. It can be briefly explained as "Everything must either be or not be." Thought must be verbal; individuals can *feel*, but not *think* without words. If verbal thought can be restricted to either one idea, thing, or proposition, or to another idea, thing, or proposition, the world becomes a neat, definable, orderly place in which to live. The real world, where many things occur chaotically at the same time, is not like this. Those who know and obey this law can fantasize that they know precisely at any given moment where everything either *is* or *is not*. The fantasy that there are only two sides to every question makes truth easily attainable. The world will never be such a simplistic place. When objects or people are perceived as *either* this or that, *neither* this nor that, they project into simplistic two-valued reality illusions.

This illusion, consciously and unconsciously structured by millions throughout the world, represents one of the truly great political, social, judicial, and economic con games of all time. No

reality perceived by humans has ever been so simple as to possess only two sides. The two sides are perceptually constructed, imagined, made up. In reality, there can be as many sides as there are people involved—or many more.

Perceived values might, were we educated in a more reasonable, reality-oriented system, be more accurately assessed on a broad, flexible scale between any two polarities—good-bad, weak-strong, beautiful-ugly, moral-immoral, etc. Evaluation would involve qualities of *more or less*, rather than *either/or*. Whenever people are engineered into an acceptance of a two-valued system, they have been set up to accept black-and-white stereotypical nonsense. They have lost autonomy and control over their perceptions. Perception can then be narrowly channeled in virtually any desired direction; *truth* can be logically, often eternally, ascertained.

Perceived reality, as expressed verbally, pictorially, or mathematically, has an infinite range of possible values, meanings, orientations, and potentialities. The "two sides to every question" is a fiction that flatters the human need to perceive the world in a balanced, symmetrical, proportionate, simplistic illusion. With language, almost anything is possible. Why not three sides, twenty-seven, or even sixty-nine?

*Verbal splits*, divisions that cannot be made in the reality world, further enforce the law of the excluded middle. Examples include *mind* and *body*, *thinking* and *feeling*, *emotion* and *intellect*, and *conscious* and *unconscious*.

There appear abundant economic justifications for verbal splitting. In medicine, for example, there exists an entire dictionary of specialties. Medicine has become a depersonalized production line such as those in automobile plants where workers assume limited responsibility. Such systems were developed to optimize returns on invested capital. In medicine, they optimize returns on the physicians' investment in education and office equipment. They also reduce work to repetitive, simplistic tasks. Physicians can always pass the buck to another specialist. The victims, of course, are the patients—both in physical well-being and in their pocketbooks.

*Mind* and *body* are totally integrated. No bodily function operates independently. *Thought* and *feeling* are likewise inseparable, as are *emotion* and *intellect*. No one can be certain where *consciousness* begins and ends. *Conscious* and *unconscious* are completely inte-

grated, interdependent processes. These functions operate all at the same time. In the reality of the human body, these complex processes are nonverbal.

Verbal concepts are fictional descriptions of perceived reality that may not exist in any actual physical or biological way. Verbal descriptions are useful from time to time as tentative, theoretical concepts or conjectures. As individuals become more skilled in understanding their abstraction processes, earlier perceptions often turn out to have been repressed and restricted. New discoveries both in science and everyday life rely upon the availability of new reality perceptions, perceptions previously unavailable. Virtually nothing in the human environment is genuinely new. Something may be labeled "new" as a marketing or ad ploy, but upon close examination the pseudo-new usually turns out to be the same old stuff, redesigned for perceptual hype.

Scholarship, science, and even business unfortunately train individuals to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before. Entrepreneurs usually know that following someone's footsteps leads to the same places where others have already arrived. Few, if any, discoveries result from conformity. Societies, nevertheless, typically punish or restrict nonconformity. The nonconformist in science, scholarship, art, business, or any other form of human activity threatens the security of conformists—usually in the majority. Like discoverers, discoveries are rarely welcomed. They scare hell out of everyone with a vested interest.]

### Sacred Profanity

Titian's masterpiece *Sacred and Profane Love* portrays two women seated at a well—the one fully and most properly clothed being "sacred," the other, a voluptuous nude, presumably "profane." The longer a viewer considers "sacred," the more profane she becomes. The more reflection given "profane," the more sacred she becomes. The viewer finally realizes that the two women are the same individual painted twice. Both sacred and profane appear as inherent qualities in all women, the two polarities inextricably interrelated. A similar verbal paradox appears in all two-valued assumptions. "Normal" behavior, or "normal" anything, upon close

scrutiny often becomes perversely abnormal.<sup>5</sup> The world's absolute truths are inevitably unmasked as the lies of scoundrels, fools, or both. Whenever morals ("truths") triumph, many evil things occur. As far as perception can precariously navigate reality, and verbally, pictorially, or even mathematically symbolize it at any given moment, the only certainty remains uncertainty.<sup>6</sup>

Uncertainties can be fun. Disaster is not ensured when "eternal truths" are questioned or doubted. The present collection of absolute truths that dominate world decisions, policies, and perspectives appear certain to destroy civilization eventually. The present collection of absolute truths were enforced during 1986, the International Year of Peace, by \$900 billion in global military expenditures.<sup>7</sup> This massive waste of vital resources, capital, and people is detailed in Ruth Leger Sivard's annual *World Military and Social Expenditures*. No disaster of greater magnitude is imaginable in a world where two-thirds of the population go to bed hungry every night while they are being saved from or by someone's eternal truth.

In a brief summary of Aristotle's law of the excluded middle, British psychiatrist R. D. Laing outlined the ultimate in human folly for a world narcotized by self-indulgence, unyielding greed, and flagrant hypocrisy.

*As long as we cannot up-level our "thinking" beyond Us and Them, the goodies and baddies, it will go on and on. The only possible end will be when all the goodies have killed all the baddies, and all the baddies all the goodies, which does not seem so difficult or unlikely since to Us, we are the goodies and they are the baddies, while to Them, we are the baddies and they are the goodies.*

*Millions of people have died this century and millions more are going to, including, we have every reason to expect, many of Us and our children, because we cannot break this knot.*

*It seems a comparatively simple knot, but it is tied very, very tight—around the throat, as it were—of the whole human species.*

*But don't believe me because I say so, look in the mirror and see for yourself. (Laing, *The Politics of the Family*, p. 49)]*

## The Logic of Contradiction

The *law of contradiction* was Aristotle's tidiest contribution to logic and thought. By outlawing contradictions, he dismissed, ignored, and camouflaged the annoying problems inherent in verbal, pictorial, or mathematical language systems. The *law of contradiction*—often summarized as, "Nothing can both be and not be"—cleaned up difficulties stemming from the contradictions, inconsistencies, and paradoxes that are rampant throughout the world. Future generations could ignore loose ends that did not fit into an orderly, consistent language system.

Over the centuries, Aristotelian laws evolved into actual commandments over thought and reason. Had Shakespeare's Hamlet known he could have both *been* and *not been*, at the same time, he might have lived a much happier, more well-adjusted life. But, as Shakespeare well knew, great literature and drama are rarely written about well-adjusted lives.

After Aristotle, humans could verbally inventory and explain the complete world in which they lived—the world they thought, and thought that they thought, they perceived, categorized, defined, and isolated. Human confidence in what was believed to be perceived allowed construction of a logic through which most mysteries, uncertainties, and contradictions vanished. A word or phrase could always be invented, constructed, defined, or redefined to create an illusion of knowledge. The human ego even stretched into the heavens. God was verbally defined by dozens of religions and hundreds of sects, each in their own interest.

In troubled family relationships, for example, therapists finally conceded that anything that affects one influences all. Though husbands and wives blame each other individually, they are mutually involved and supportive of each other's dilemmas. The perception that individuals are independent and isolated from one another constitutes an incredibly destructive illusion of reality. The illusion, nevertheless, has political, ideological, and commercial potentials for those who profit from such illusions.

The world of perceived reality, counter to Aristotelian laws, is interconnected; everything in it is influenced by everything else in that world. *Nothing exists in isolation.* Isolation or exclusivity is only

a perceptual illusion—often a dreadful illusion. Poet Carl Sandburg was once asked to identify the most evil word in the English language. Without hesitation he replied, "Exclusive!"

Inside the body, for example, all physiological systems interconnect through the brain, circulatory, and neurological networks. All these *known*, *unknown*, and *unknowable* systems operate continuously, inextricably coordinated with one another. What *appears* to be going on is often a matter of mere biased, superficial speculation.

Verbal descriptions, only definable by other verbal descriptions, permit humans to convince themselves they know *all* about something about which they know absolutely nothing. Such pseudosciences as economics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology—generalized as social sciences—are crammed with verbalistic nonsense. Judicial verbalization also floats similarly within dense clouds of human fantasy. The social sciences are rarely scientific and are quite often antisocial.

For example, the University of Kansas Medical School produced an educational film on tuberculosis for a refresher course for physicians, many of whom had labored years in tuberculosis sanatoriums. Researchers placed transparent plugs in rabbit ears, then introduced tubercle bacilli into tissue beneath the plug. Through time-lapse photography, they documented the bacteria in the ear tissue—how the growth involved cell, neuron, circulatory, and blood-chemistry interactions; how these complex interactions were affected by the rabbit's fear, sexual stimulation, hunger, thirst, and the introduction of various drugs.

The film upset and confused many older physicians who had spent their lives with only verbal definitions of tuberculosis treatment and cure. Their training and practice had been based on simplistic verbal descriptions, far removed from the perceivable interrelated reality of the disease. Even the *submicro* level of perceivable medical reality is now available to those physicians who have mastered higher mathematics, already a consideration in the treatment of cancer and other pathologies.

The subvisually enhanced paper discussed earlier provides another illustration of the law of contradiction in a business situation. After development of the embedding process, the paper company discovered it was virtually impossible to convince controllers in

large corporations that monthly invoices subliminally embedded with "Pay now! Imperative! Most Important! Cannot Wait! Vital! Give Precedence!" could increase cash flow. The paper, however, had to be sold to corporation controllers. Controllers, especially among the larger companies, are probably the most ultraconservative executives in business. Their job is to administer cash flow—money in, money out. They are employed to rigidly evaluate—in terms of strict, traditional, empirical, Aristotelian, conscious, visible criteria—the numbers that describe the day-to-day financial status of complex organizations. Even the mention of *subliminal* or *the unconscious* will likely evoke anger, disbelief, and incredulity from such officers. They are perceptually very special people—which probably accounts for their becoming controllers. Most dismissed the idea of subvisually enhanced paper as complete nonsense. Sales managers, on the other hand, were immediately excited about any idea that might influence purchasing behavior. The controllers could not perceive around Aristotle's law of contradiction. They were biased to believe *nothing could both be and not be*. Either the subliminal embeds in the paper were there or they were not there.

The paper company then developed a version of the embedded paper that concealed the subliminal message when viewed from a 90° angle but which was visible by turning the paper to 15°. The embedded message was both there and not there. *Being and not being* is a perceptual issue. The verb *to be* is one of the most complex verb forms in any of the world's languages. *To be* literally means "to exist," and existence is a perceptual issue. The demonstration paper illustrated that a message could both *be* and *not be*—at the same time. Most of the controllers appeared finally convinced.

Consistency appears a fatal flaw in every iron-clad system, theorem, or law of language—whether linguistic, pictorial, or mathematical. Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno wrote, "If one never contradicts himself, it is certain he knows nothing." Inconsistency is a natural human condition, certainly for language systems. An illusion of consistency, however, can easily be constructed—either in relationships between persons and persons or between persons and things. Ad and public-relations technicians construct and sustain illusions of consistency—at least until some-



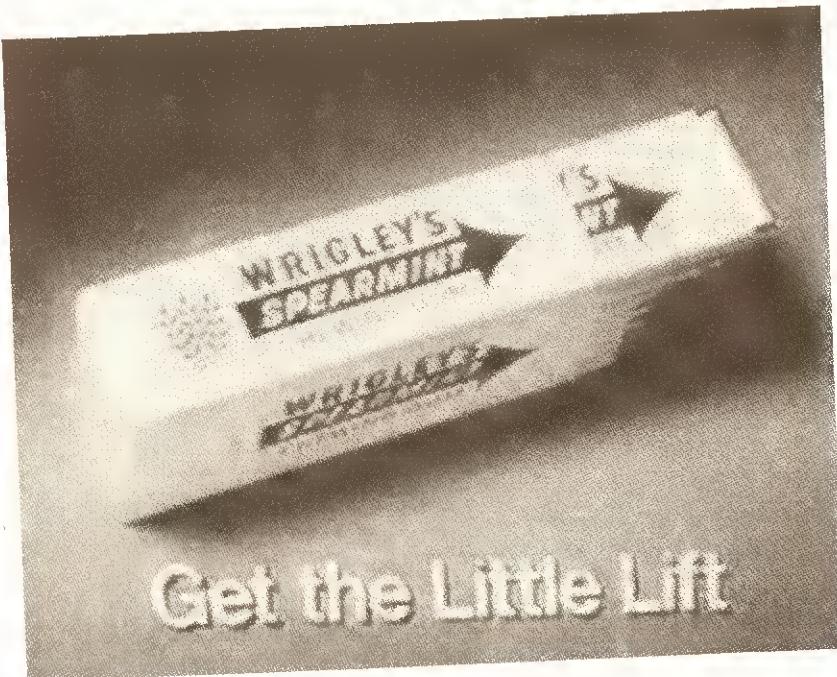
© AUGUST BULLOCK, 1979; ARTWORK BY NELSON CARRICK



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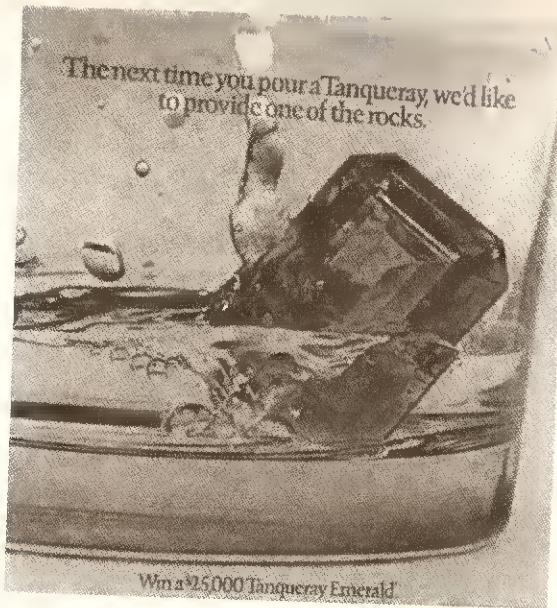


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4

WRIGLEY STILLS BY CLIFF ROTH



The next time you pour a Tanqueray, we'd like to provide one of the rocks.

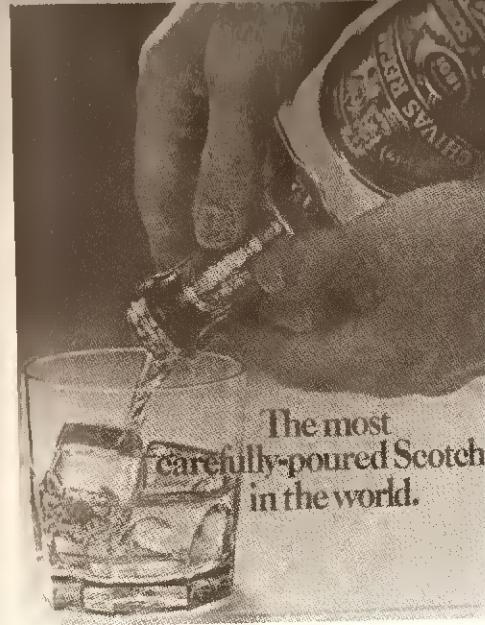
Wm x 25000 Tanqueray Emerald

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There have been moist layer cakes before.  
But now there's new **SuperMoist**

6



The most  
fully-poured Scotch  
in the world.

7



**PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO FIND THE BREASTS IN THESE ICE CUBES SINCE 1957.**

卷之三

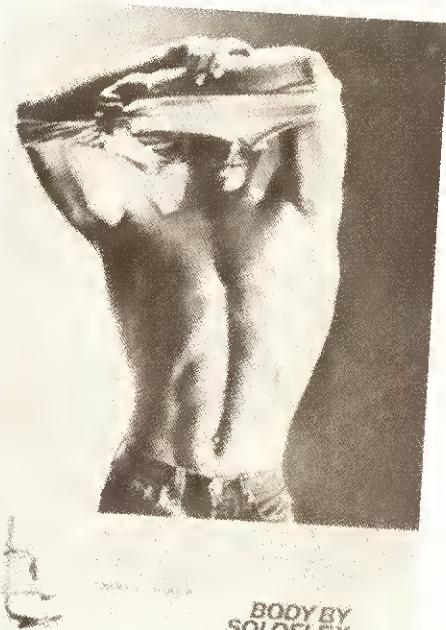
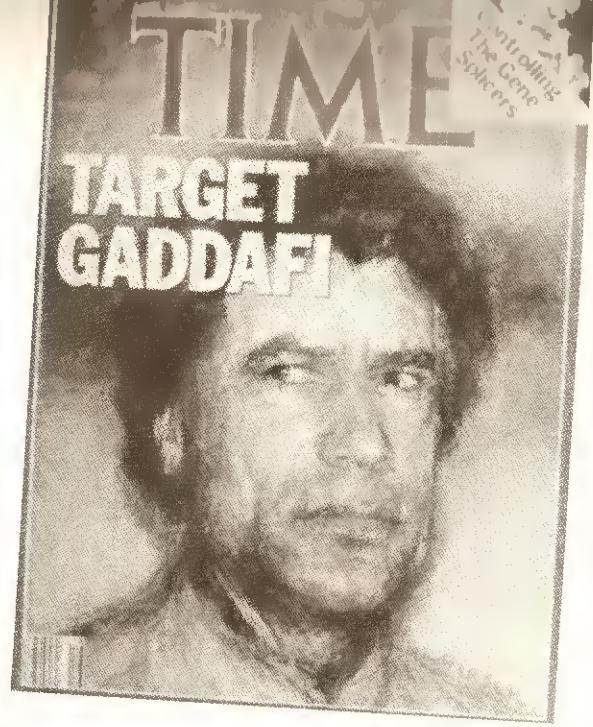
卷之三十一

此處有許多的水生植物，如：睡蓮、荷花、菱角等。

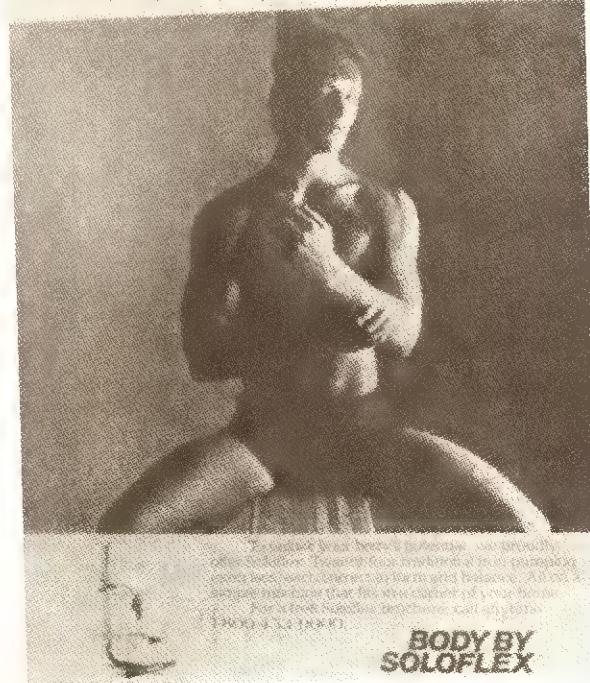
1. *Identify the problem*  
2. *Decide what to do about it*  
3. *Plan what to do*

she's gone. I'm not angry  
with her, just annoyed.  
I'd like to speak to her  
though, if that's all right.

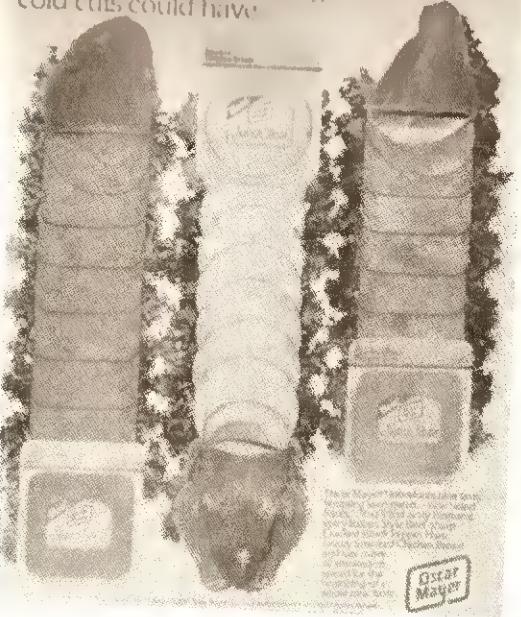
**ADVERTISING**



"No pain, no gain."



**Oscar Mayer Introduces Select Slices.**  
More taste than you thought  
cold cuts could have.



13



15

**COUPON**

**Buy One, Get One Free!**

What's your favorite chicken? No longer have? Barbecue, Mild Mustard, Baked & Smoked or Honey? Come in and buy one order and get the second order free.

Restrictions apply. See participating Oscar Mayer locations for details.

One Coupon  
Per Person  
Per Visit

Offer Good  
While Supplies Last  
Not Good  
After 12/31/92

McDonald's

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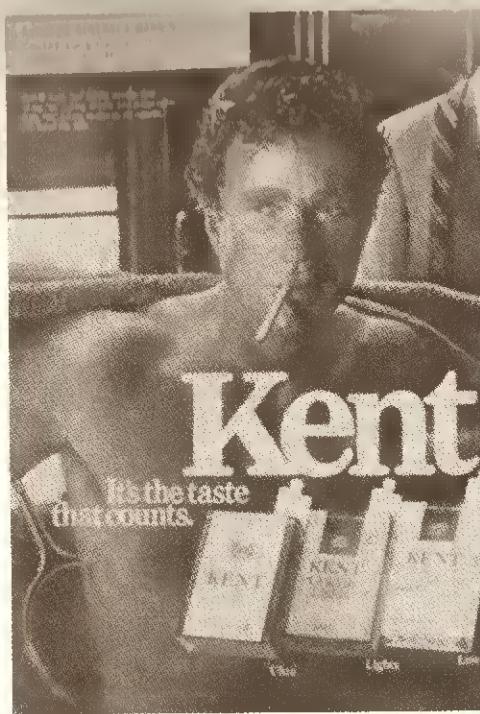


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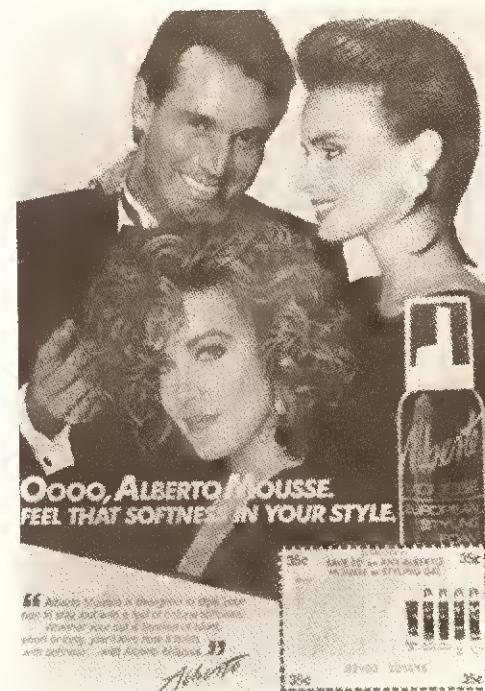


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WISHBONE STILLS BY CLIFF ROTH



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habillez-vous tous les matins  
de couleurs qui chantent!

Eminence

25



Can you think of anything  
that gives you a better return  
on your investment?

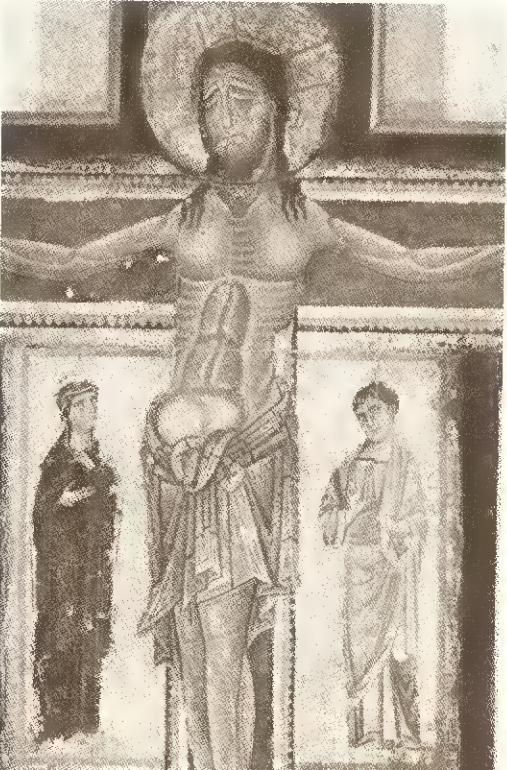
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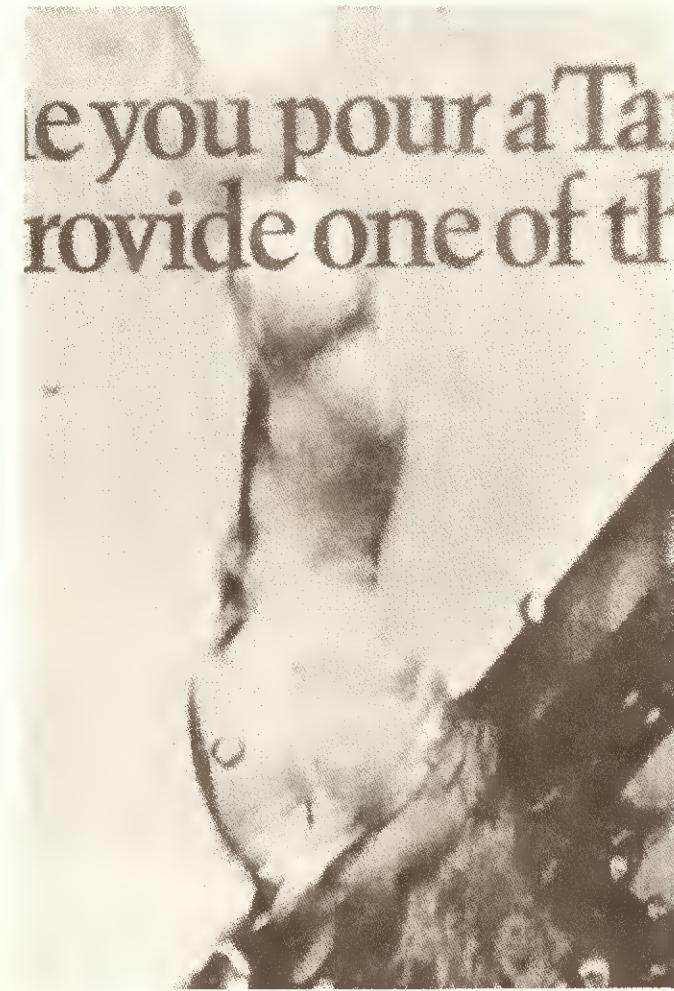
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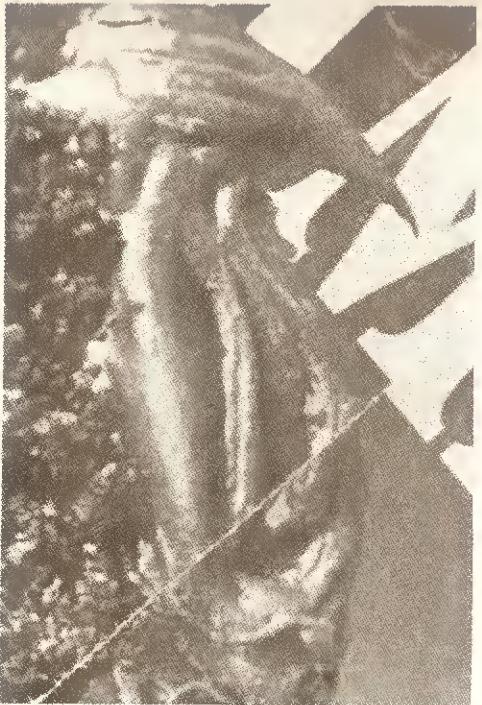
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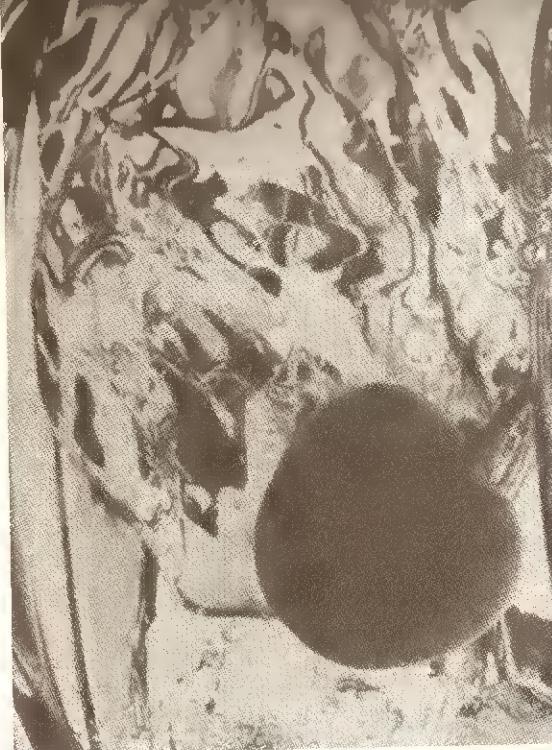
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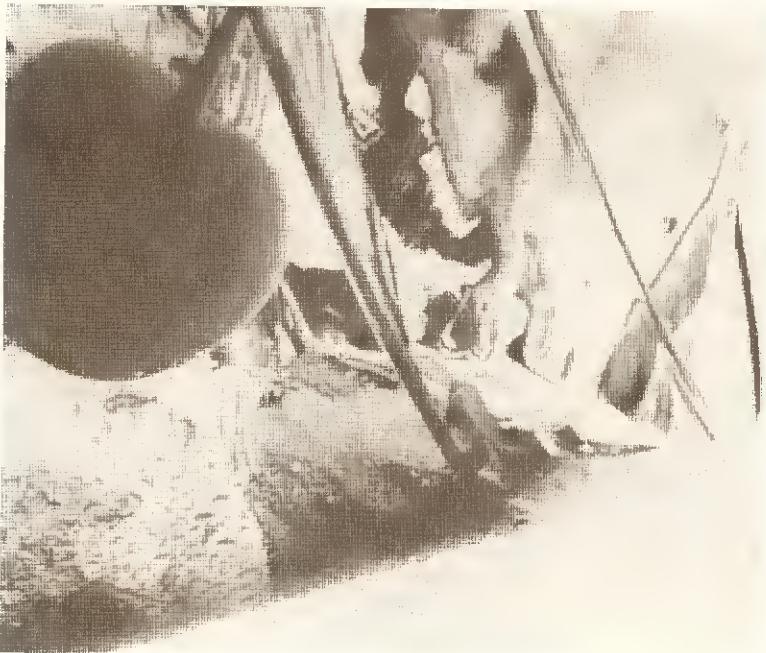
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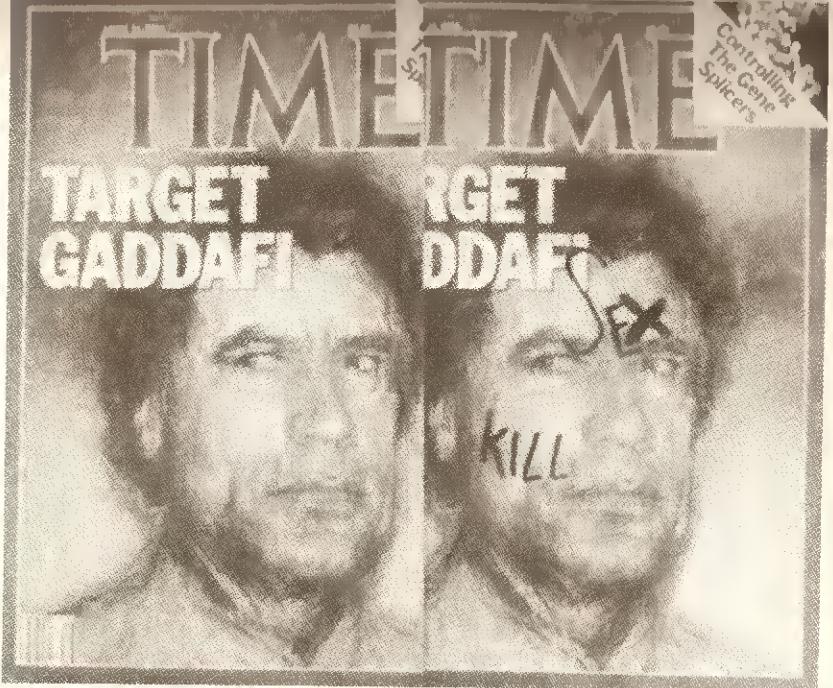
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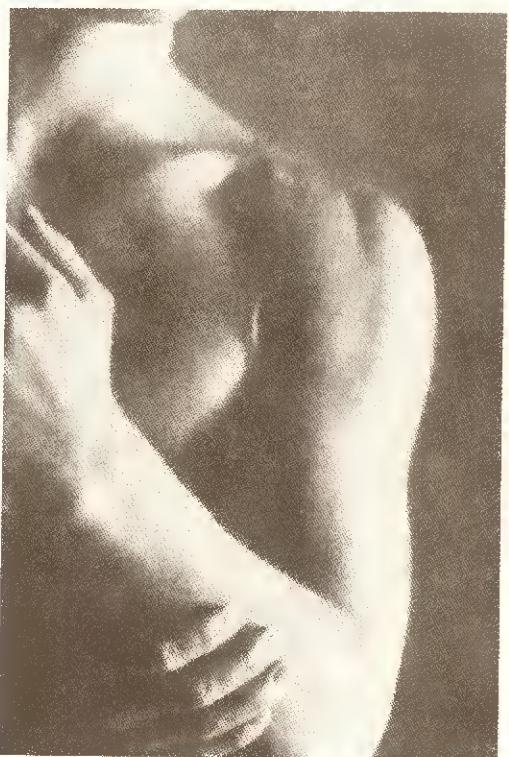
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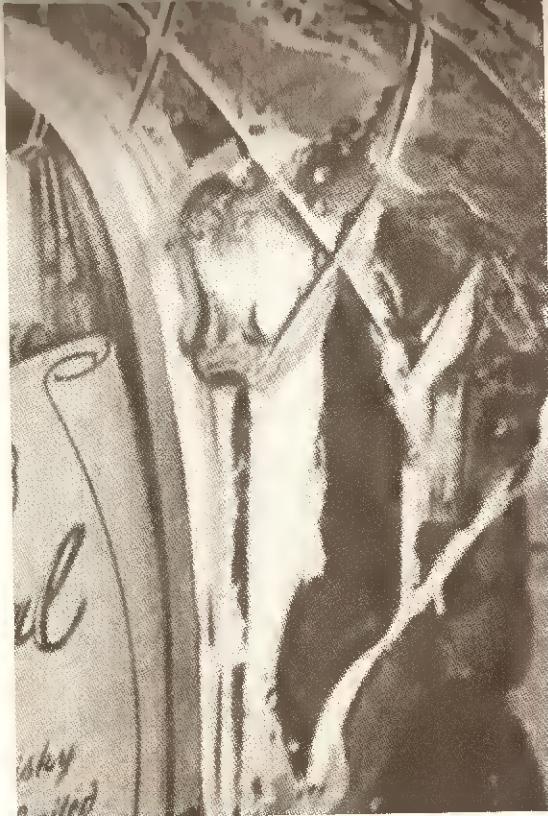
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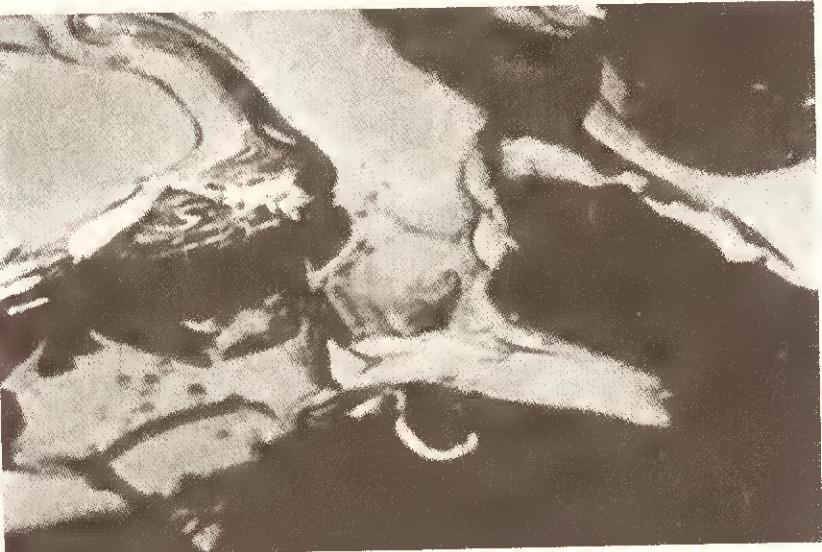
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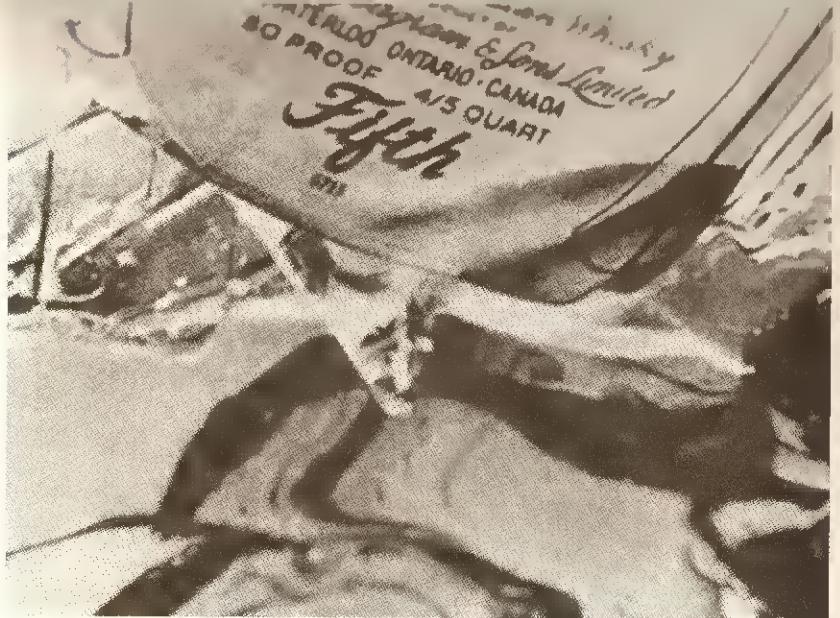
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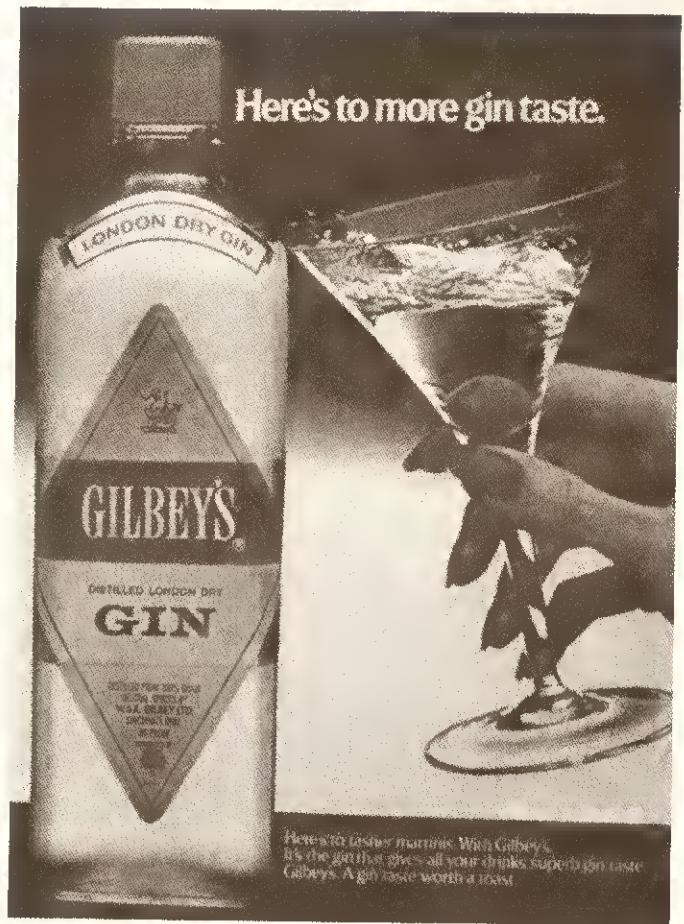
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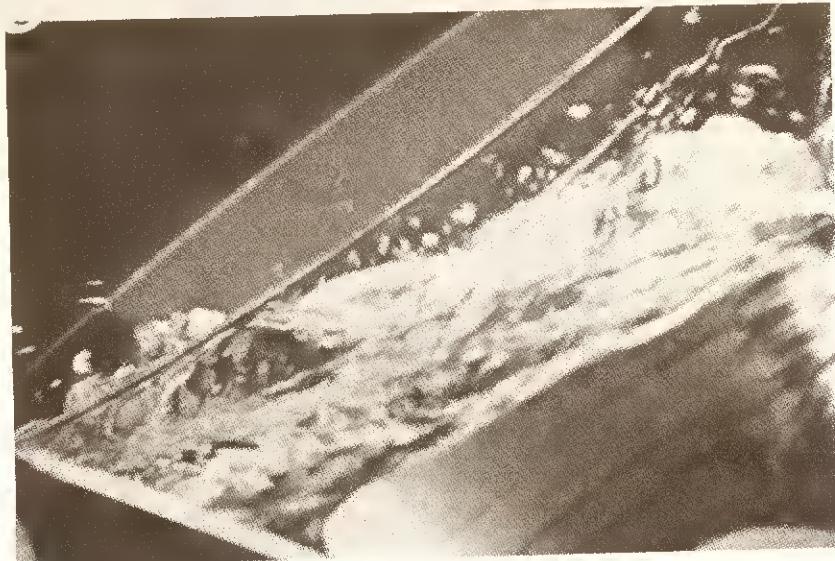
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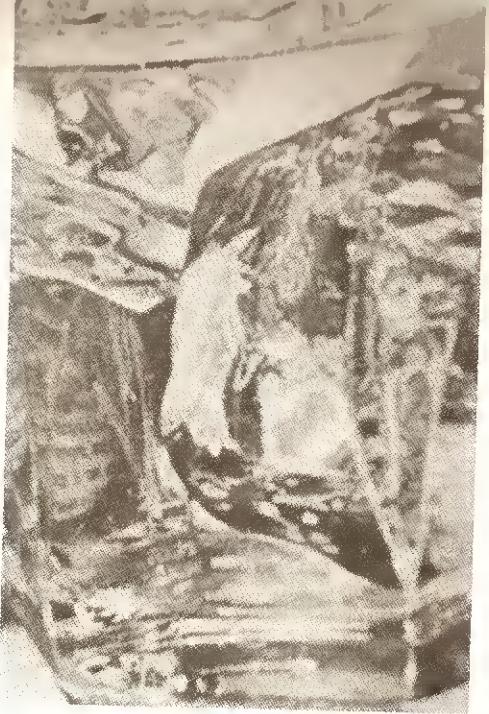
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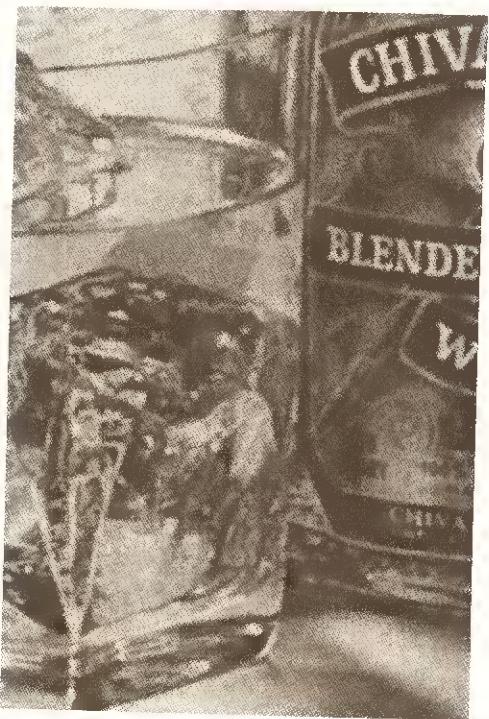
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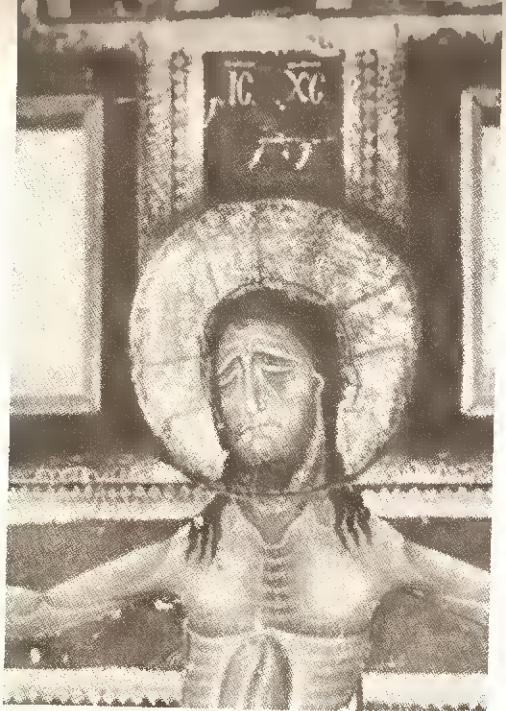
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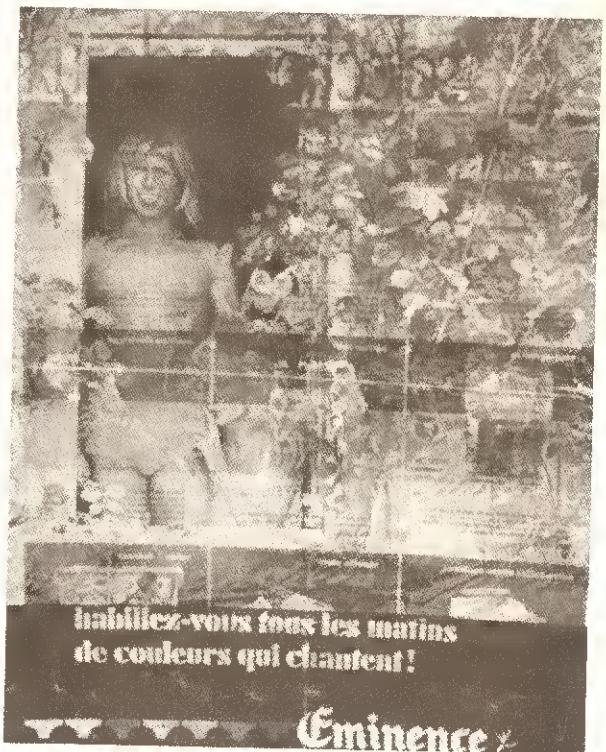
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one takes a careful, critical look. Consistency is a constructed role individuals play in various occupational situations. Politicians and corporate executives often become very adept at the role. Consistent reconciliations of inconsistency are perceptually constructed. They may look good on paper, but they are inherently fake.

To disagree with, or disobey, the language structure heretically violates the conventional wisdoms. Paradox, inconsistency, and contradiction are normal expectations in scientific logic and reasoning. When one does not find them, extreme caution should be the rule. Can anyone actually *be* what they have consciously and unconsciously molded themselves into an appearance of being? Actually, the more consistently honest someone appears, the more carefully the silverware should be guarded. Images are stereotypes, lies, cosmetic concealments, and misrepresentations. Images usually conceal their opposite characteristics. When contradictions do not appear, they have been deleted or camouflaged. Intelligence analysts search for consistency constructed to fulfill normal expectations, then distrust it completely. Personnel investigators usually question too-perfect résumés.

Verbal, pictorial, or mathematical statements *can* be both true and false. Truth and falsity are perceptual conclusions and constructions. They are products of the ways humans feel, see, hear, think, smell, and believe they know, or are manipulated to believe they know. Humans usually impose perceptual evaluations upon reality for practical reasons. Motives, of course, can be altruistic, self-serving, or varying degrees of both. The first question in language behavior analysis should be "What is the speaker really trying to do?"

### Truth in Advertising

The law of contradiction plays an important role in the mass-communication media. Audiences have been taught to accept information at face value from high-credibility sources. They rarely probe beneath the surface. They should! High-credibility sources are readily purchased by any ad or public-relations flack. Unnamed "high government officials," "four out of five doctors," "reliable sources," "confidential informants," "recent surveys," or similar

ghostly attributions are frequently a setup for false, self-serving misinformation.

Public-relations manipulation—much of which is presented as news information—can be true in a simplistic, linear sense, even provable in court. On the other hand, such statements can also be false when considered in context, or in relation to other concealed information. Ad copy is often a technical masterpiece of deception that can be true at one level, but—upon closer examination—also false. A maze of federal agencies supposedly regulates ads for false and deceptive statements. The Federal Trade Commission is the most important, with a large staff of attorneys who act against only the most blatant offenders. Among ad copywriters, FTC regulations are considered a joke. Any experienced writer can verbalize around any law that could be written—simply through a knowledge of Aristotelian logic. Ad writers also make angels dance on the head of a pin. Anyone who gets caught at the game is usually considered inept.

The Food and Drug Administration supposedly controls ads for food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, and hazardous products. The Federal Communication Commission indirectly controls broadcast ads through its licensing power but as a practical matter serves the industry, rarely the consumer. The Postal Service supposedly regulates direct mail ads. The Treasury Department's Division of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms has broad, usually unenforced powers to regulate deceptive alcohol and tobacco ads, including the recent ruling that prohibits subliminal ads for alcoholic beverages (see Appendix). The Grain Division of the Agricultural Department supposedly regulates truth in seed ads. The Securities and Exchange Commission ineffectually regulates the ads for securities. Finally, the Civil Aeronautics Board pretends to regulate air-carrier ads.

These federal agencies, with similar state regulatory groups, presumably protect the consumer against deceptive ads. In fact, they serve to legitimize ads. They provide consumers with the illusion that they are secure from manipulation, that they think for themselves, are protected from false and deceptive information. U.S. consumers have been taught to believe that anything published or broadcast must be true. Anything that passes muster with all these publicly funded agencies must be legitimate. Institutional ads

by the National Association of Advertising Agencies—the advertising of advertising—publicize the fantasy that ads are validated by regulatory agencies.

The ads published as illustrations in my four books—all very successful ads—are false, deceptive, and misleading. Subliminal ads, for example, have been declared “contrary to the public interest,” “clearly intended to be deceptive,” by the FTC, FCC, and ATF. Subliminals are also prohibited by the voluntary advertising and broadcasting codes of the industries. No federal agency has ever brought a case against an advertiser over subliminals.

### Round and Round the Paradox

In a world long dominated and ruled by Aristotelian laws, paradox is a difficult contradiction to demonstrate. End and beginning, cause and effect, merge into one within a paradox. They become a circular, mutually reinforcing unity. This unity has been symbolized at least since ancient Greece by the Ouroboros—the snake that bites its tail. A paradox reveals the fragile nature of contradiction and consistency in verbal formulations.

There exists an assortment of mathematically derived paradoxes, perceptual constructions that do not fit, are logical to a point where they become totally illogical. Unfortunately, mathematical paradox relates to an unimaginable world for nonmathematicians. The two distinct languages—ours and the mathematicians’—are so different that even the best attempts at translation fail. Kurt Gödel, a German mathematician, used mathematical reasoning to explore mathematical reasoning. The attempt was not unlike using the Aristotelian system to comprehend inconsistencies within the Aristotelian system. Attempts to analyze a system by itself lead nowhere unless a perspective outside the system can be discovered. This is like trying to prove ads false when by conventional logic they can be proven true.

Gödel translated an ancient paradox—the Epimenides or *liar* paradox—into mathematical terms. Simply stated verbally, the paradox reads, Epimenides was a Cretan who made one immortal statement, “All Cretans are liars!” Translated into mathematical terms, Gödel’s paradox read, “All consistent axiomatic formula-

tions of number theory include undecidable propositions." Paradox demonstrates that every language system includes inherent, unprovable statements.

Another paradox is: "The following sentence is false. The preceding sentence is true." Such *strange loops*, as they are called in mathematics and logic, involve rules that change themselves directly or indirectly. The preceding paradox appears unsolvable within Aristotelian laws of logic. Once outside the system, however, in a non-Aristotelian world, the verbal definitions of *true* and *false* can be expanded to include situations where *false* is sometimes *true* and vice versa. Or, in response to unresolvable inconsistency, the logical sequence can be inverted: "The preceding sentence is true." There is no preceding sentence, so the sentence must be false. Therefore, "the following sentence is false" is actually true—achieving verbal consistency. Either sentence, of course, could be both *true* and *false*.

Contradictions, inconsistencies, and paradoxes can be productively confronted, tasted, enjoyed, and played with endlessly. They are the source of new insights, innovations, inventions, and creative problem-solving. They appear at the roots of human intelligence. Innovation usually upsets the status quo, and especially people whose investments depend upon the status quo. Aristotle's *law of contradiction* compels us to sweep all those lovely contradictions under the intellectual rug that divides formality from informality, flexibility from inflexibility, creative play from serious obsession.

Paradox often unconsciously affects our daily lives. We rarely suspect we have been entrapped by an Aristotelian law of language and thought. Language creates paradox when it talks about itself. This is one of the reasons so many writers who try to explain communication communicate so poorly. When you discuss "what she said, about what you said, about what she said, about what you said," et cetera, you are into paradox. Marital competitions often evolve into paradox. The Ouroboros bites its tail in every conflict where effect feeds back on its own cause. For example, when she blames his impotence, and he blames her frigidity, and she blames his impotence and he blames her frigidity, ad infinitum. Edward Albee's grim play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* cruelly demonstrates the disasters of paradox. Once established, paradox leads into the circle with no beginning or end, beyond cause and

effect, self-perpetuating until disaster or death, via unmeasurable unhappiness.

The popular television personalities who huckster themselves as religious prophets—Jimmy Swaggart, Oral Roberts, Jerry Falwell, or Pat Robertson—all of whom claim regular talks with God—should ask Him during their next conversation if He can make a stone so heavy He cannot lift it.

No system can explain or verify its validity, or lack of validity, unless it utilizes concepts outside the system. These concepts must be developed from larger, more flexible systems. Unfortunately, this larger system inevitably becomes subject to incompleteness. It also is a perceptual product, like its predecessor. An even more comprehensive system must then be evolved, ad infinitum. This is, or should be, the process of scholarship, science, and human growth—a never-ending succession of language systems constructed to verify one another. The search for *truth* should never cease, especially when someone perceives he or she has found it.

## ! Unpredictable Predictions

When Aristotelian laws of thought reign unquestioned, a curious conceptualization of *reliability* and *predictability* magically appears. Three non-Aristotelian axioms should be considered basic requirements for literacy.

*First:* Today's science acknowledges that everything in the perceivable biological and physical world (people and things) exists in a state of process and change. Nothing in the perceivable world is static and permanent. Like the people and things observed, the observers are also in a state of process and change.

*Second:* Everything in the perceivable world affects everything else. Nothing exists in isolation.

*Third:* Perceived reality is, for better or worse, simply a perception. Human perception can never be considered free from varying degrees of subjectivity. Nothing can seriously be considered as objective perception of an objective reality. Perceivers can never be removed from their perceptions.

Perceptions of the world are both conscious and unconscious constructions. Perceptual constructions are put together to be per-

ceived and acted upon. They are built to serve motives, objectives, or sometimes just for fun. As for the certainty, truth, or validity of these perceived realities, physicist Werner Heisenberg concluded, "All information between humans can only be exchanged within a field of tolerance for uncertainty. Every judgement, especially those judgements of science, stands upon the edge of error." Perceived reality constructions in the area of U.S.-Soviet relations are particularly dangerous, especially since one wonders how well perceptual processes are understood by each side. These processes are not publicly acknowledged to exist.

Even when the language-logic structure is intellectually understood, it is quite another matter to utilize this knowledge in everyday life. Language is deeply ingrained in human personality, culture, conscious and unconscious memories, thought, and even dreams. Any modification of the system will require time, patience, determination, and, for most individuals, a new type of rigorous self-discipline.

Every assumption about the past, present, and future must be doubted, questioned, and tested repeatedly for accuracy in its relationship to perceived realities. Value systems must be critically appraised for validity. Conclusions must be reviewed and repeatedly questioned. Relationships with objects, individuals, and groups must be reappraised in relation to time and perceivable fact structures.

Psychologist Prescott Lecky utilized a concept of *self-reflexiveness* to describe the new learning process. With practice, individuals can develop the ability to view themselves, as they view themselves, while viewing themselves, et cetera. The objective is to move perception farther away from the first, immediate level to a more abstract perspective. It is a way to become more aware of perceptual processes and verify or contradict the validity of first-level perceptions. The technique provides a tremendous advantage in games such as chess, poker, military intelligence, or business competition.

Perceptual distance gives you a platform from which you can see actions to reactions to reactions. Advanced chess players can often self-reflect out to three or four levels. The technique can render *conscious* perceptual reactions that were *unconscious*.

The collective effects of mass media, quite unfortunately, rein-

force a population's superficial, one-dimensional reactions to immediate, first-level stimuli. Aristotle's *laws of identity, excluded middle, and contradiction* are commercially expedient structures. Their limitations and fallacies remain hidden. Indoctrinated populations remain helplessly vulnerable to verbal or pictorial manipulation in any direction profitable to manipulators.

## 6 | THE REAL THING— SYMBOLIC REALITIES

The bible should be recognized as mythological, should be maintained in symbolic form and not replaced by scientific substitutes. There is no substitute for the use of symbols and myths. They are the language of faith.

Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary*

A word or image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. We use symbolic terms constantly to represent concepts we cannot define or fully comprehend.

Carl Gustav Jung, *Man and His Symbols*

Whenever your conscious mind takes anything for granted, tells you something is ordinary, common, insignificant, unworthy of careful attention, go back and take another very careful look. Constantly question your questions and—above all—your answers.

Marshall McLuhan,  
University of Toronto seminar

*Archetypal* literally means “the original form.” There have been numerous theories that archetypal symbolic meanings are innate, inherited aspects of genetic heritage. They are found in sight and sound, and in smell, taste, and touch. Archetypal symbols were first discussed in the writings of third-century scholar-priest Saint Augustine. He discovered religious symbols with similar meanings in cultures that had had no known contact over long time periods. Saint Augustine attributed archetypal symbolism to “the hand of God.”

Archetypal symbols of one sort or another are common to all cultures and peoples. Symbolic meanings generally involve unconscious perceptual mechanisms and underlie conscious definitions. Humans label consciously, but symbolic significance remains at an unconscious level. Archetypal symbols usually involve the two polarities of human existence—the beginning (reproduction, birth, rebirth) and the end (death, actual or symbolic). These two polarities of human experience have been the major preoccupations of philosophy, literature, art, and religious thought for thousands of years.

Most women adamantly deny that lipstick and rouge are anything but functional products with which they decorate their faces. Cosmetic ad makers know there is a much deeper, more powerful symbolic significance. Women color their lips and faces, so they say, to appear attractive. But what does that mean? Heterosexual men do not use cosmetics. For females, *attractive* relates to sexual or reproductive appeal, fertility, even availability.

During sexual excitation, female genitals become swollen and bright red or purple, as do the facial cheeks. Sexual colorations are less intense and noticeable in men. Lipstick creates a symbolic vulva on the face. Rouged cheeks symbolize the sexual flush. Purple coloration around the eyes also symbolizes the female genitalia. Purple and various shades thereof are called by artists and designers *genital colors*. Women’s cosmetics create archetypal genital symbolism, powerfully attractive both to men and to other women—unconsciously, of course. Genital symbolism in cosmetics dates back in human history as far as can be known. Seminal fluid was once used as a body and facial cosmetic.

It did not take much intelligence to realize archetypal symbols could produce enormous profits. Cosmetics manufacturers and

their ad agencies elaborate exhaustively on basic archetypal themes. A glance through any periodical provides a moist array of female genital symbolism in eyes, lips, hair, jewelry, clothing, shoes, and food. The exploitation of archetypal symbolic themes fills virtually every ad. Symbolic meanings, however, are repressed by audiences, hidden from themselves by individuals entrapped in the manipulation.

Archetypal auditory symbols include sounds from nature—72 heartbeats per minute, 4/4 time in music; waves at sea and rolling over a beach; wind in trees or on the plains; thunder, rain; bird and animal sounds; human and animal breathing; and many kinds of silences.

Orgasmic sounds are archetypal. A rock music producer became curious about using a tape of male and female orgasmic sounds in an album. A musician-composer, once a musician in a major symphony orchestra, he had built a successful career as a designer of rock groups. He constructed roles and group relationships, costumed and cosmeticized performers, designed staging, and composed, arranged, and orchestrated the music. He had designed rock groups in which the members never met personally. Each recorded separately, and the individual performances were assembled through a studio mixer. Even group photographs were composite, pasted-together assemblages. Emotionally unstable rock musicians were easier to manage individually, he explained.

Once the packaged rock group was assembled, it was sold to a major record company. Several such groups had become internationally famous and financially successful. Success in the popular music industry is defined simply. They made money, lots of money. The producer was an interesting individual—intellectually curious and sensitive to an extraordinary range of conscious and unconscious audio meanings involved with human relationships. He humorously voiced contempt for the performers in his engineering projects. He called them "drug freaks," "not one competent musician if a dozen were melted together," "immature, psychopathic delinquents." The producer's success, however, was displayed in a Beverly Hills mansion and a Rolls Royce.

He decided to insert a tape of orgasmic sounds into an orchestration. His first thought was to hire an actor and actress who

could imitate orgasmic sounds. Research suggested, however, that audiences might detect falsity and misrepresentation at this level of perception. For a month the producer and his wife taped their orgasmic sounds. Ingeniously, he used a larynx microphone that amplified a broad range of more subtle sound experiences, concealing the obvious sound characteristics.

The result would probably not have been consciously recognized without explanation. The sounds were strangely unsettling and exciting. They were not sexually stimulating to conscious perception. These sounds had not been experienced consciously by many individuals. Considering the perceptual bias present during orgasm—an event that involves a neurological symphony of feelings—few ever concentrate consciously on the sounds. Unconsciously, however, orgasmic sounds exist in the memories of most humans.

When the orgasmic tape was mixed into the rock music album, the volume level varied—sometimes almost imperceptible, other times deafening. When the completed tape was finally auditioned for a major record company, the producer was awed by the response. Contracts were being typed even before the audition was completed. The producer reported that never in his experience had anyone reacted so strongly, so emotionally to an audition. The man was exuberant. Several weeks later, however, he had second thoughts. He began to worry that the contracts had been signed primarily because of the subliminally embedded orgasmic sounds. The rock group he had invented, at least so he said, was just not that good. In fact, he described it as "quite awful." He finally disclosed to the record company what he had done. They were furious. The contract was canceled.

Two years later, the producer's orgasmic rock album was released by another major record company. The album sold over 10 million copies and spun off rock videos. This time the producer kept the orgasmic tape a secret. Once an audience is told about subliminal embeds in sound, the knowledge changes the way they perceive the music. They become tense, strained, listening carefully to detect the embedded material. Some individuals emotionalize themselves into what could be described as *defensive paranoia* in response to suspected embedded subliminals.

## Symbols Evoke Feelings

Symbols circumvent conscious thought and logic. They evoke vague, unspecific feelings. Symbolism constitutes a subliminal technique of communication. Sophisticated, carefully researched, and powerful symbolic communication is basic to commercial manipulation. Symbols directly affect perception, feelings, and behavior. They do not depend upon conscious definitions or explanations.

Gold, for example, is a precious metal as it is perceived to exist in reality. But gold is far more significant to humans in symbolic value. Numerous metals have a greater monetary value and are more rare in nature, but none has a symbolic value more meaningful than gold. At the conscious level, gold is a soft, malleable metal found in relatively pure form in nature. One ounce of gold can be beaten out to 300 square feet. In thin sheets, it transmits green light. Gold does not tarnish or corrode. Because of electrical conductivity, the largest industrial use of gold is in electrical and electronic circuitry. Natural gold is 100% isotope gold—197; atomic number 79; atomic weight 196.967; melting point 1945°F.; specific gravity 19.3; valence 1.3; and the electronic configuration is (Xe) 4f<sup>14</sup>5d<sup>10</sup>6s<sup>1</sup>. So much for the simple facts, which have little, if anything, to do with the value of gold.

Anything with symbolic value, such as gold, provides a mystique with which humans can be manipulated. Symbol dictionaries are helpful to explore symbolic values (see Jobes; Cirlot; and Frazer). Mythology, folklore, and advertising are the means by which symbolic values have been passed along from generation to generation. They are still the best sources for symbolic meaning and significance. The known facts about gold, for example, cannot explain the preference for this metal in jewelry. As an archetypal symbol, the meaning of which appears more or less consistent over thousands of years, gold traditionally has involved religious conviction.

The symbolic meaning of gold includes an identification with solar light, often comparable to the sun, divine intelligence, a fruit of the spirit, supreme illumination, constancy, dignity, an elixir of life, excellence, love, perfection, power, purity, wealth, and wisdom. In the folklore of many cultures, a person is frequently drawn up to heaven by a gold chain that binds heaven to earth. These symbolic

or archetypal meanings for gold—interpreted somewhat differently by men and women—have been traced back to the beginning of recorded history. The preciousness of gold has always been in its symbolic value rather than in its functional or monetary use.

The International Gold Corporation ad (fig. 16) appeared in numerous national periodicals. It is a typical example of contemporary manipulation of symbolic values in the pursuit of profit. It is an out-of-focus portrait of a woman wearing a gold collar, necklace, or belt. The details are diffuse, uncertain. Whether the jewelry is around her neck or shoulders is unclear—intentionally unclear. The right background figure is also blurred as the foreground woman's bare shoulder is kissed. The lips, nose, and hair of the background figure appear feminine. The long hair of both models appears differently textured.

The word *GOLD* was printed five times in gold letters across the layout. The fine-print copy, read by approximately 5% of magazine readers, defines the jewelry in the blurred photograph as an 18-karat sculptured-gold collar, "a new direction in dressing, an eloquent way to declare your love. Nothing else feels like real gold." A collar, *gold* or otherwise, is a symbol of bondage, a means to capture, control, or possess an animal or human. The logical explanation of the ad, however, is meaningless and irrelevant, unread by 95% of readers. The ad's objective must be achieved by only three elements in the picture—gold, jewelry, and the two women.

The ad appears unexplainable and unjustifiable as a multi-million-dollar investment at any conscious level of consideration. Published in numerous national magazines, the ad cost IGC several million dollars, not including the \$25,000 to \$50,000 for the art production. The symbolic concept of *gold* is a powerful force in any of the world's cultures at the conscious level but far more powerful at the unconscious level. Directed at women, the ad stimulates strong—though nonspecific—conscious feelings.

The seemingly inept, out-of-focus ad is only worth the money invested if consumers rush out to their nearest jewelry store and buy. Like most ads, the layout was designed to be read in a few seconds, or less. The ad details may never, at any point, surface consciously in a reader's perception. Attempt to forget, for the moment, how you consciously defined the ad when you first glanced at it. Perception of an ad is a far different perceptual

experience in a book about subliminal ad manipulation than in the context of reading *Time* magazine. Search for something special in the picture. Study the ad carefully.

Turn the *GOLD* ad upside down. Try to keep your mind clear and placid. Note your first quick perception of what appears in the inverted picture. Should you have doubts, try the ad on several friends. The subliminal message is quite simple. An 18-karat-gold collar is one way to become pregnant. Pregnancy archetypally symbolizes *the beginning* and *good news*. It is impossible to know whether the collar was a reward for the pregnancy or the pregnancy a result of the gift. In any respect, pregnancy may be the most singularly important event in a woman's life—far too important to corrupt as a manipulative sales gimmick.

Virtually everything perceived by humans is symbolic, functional, or both—usually both. Modern high-technology cultures fantasize that symbolism is an archaic remnant of ancient superstition and medieval alchemy. In the strictly scientific view, such relics from the past have no effect upon modern behaviors. This represents wishful thinking at its worst. Symbolism has, nevertheless, been abolished from serious consideration in higher education, especially in the so-called social and behavioral sciences. Curiously, however, the products of modern science and technology are media-communicated, hyped, promoted, and sold through symbolism. The symbolisms of science often reflect quite unscientific throwbacks to legend, mythology, folklore, and magic.

In ads for computers, electronic equipment, and high-fidelity amplifiers and speakers, units are often arranged in phallic and vaginal relationships. For example, round or elliptical speakers provide female symbols. Amplifiers that drive the speakers are displayed as phallic symbols with their complex control dials and levers. Gender designations can be reversed by design or display. Female symbols in high-tech ads are usually controlled and dominated by male symbols.

### Symbolic Leaders

Symbolic leaders are special leaders who function through their stereotypical, fictional meaning or image. They are distinct from

organizational leaders who work within societal or institutional structures. Organizational leaders may not mean much as individuals outside their immediate area of expertise or responsibility. Their significance lies primarily in functions. Once in a while, with media support, the two types of leadership merge—often inflicting great mischief upon the world.

Ronald Reagan is an outstanding example. The many movie roles he portrayed as the heroic sheriff, RAF fighter pilot, self-sacrificing athlete, expert narrator of countless air force training films during World War II were still latent in the unconscious memories of anyone who had experienced the films. These roles had nothing to do with Reagan; he was only an actor who played fictional characters. Nevertheless, the roles formed a perceptual background—albeit at the unconscious level—for his entry into politics. During his eight years as president, his only apparent skill was in manipulating acceptance of a continuation of the movie roles. Reagan's ineptness as an executive administrator rapidly became a national disaster, culminating in the discovery that he believed in astrology. Sociologist Orrin Klapp explored the little-known world of symbolic power and authority in his important work *Symbolic Leaders*.

The U.S. is not the only country in which leaders are carefully rehearsed, their words composed by skilled craftsmen, their costumes, makeup, props, and sets engineered by skillful designers. In the developed nations, the lifelong care and feeding of the audience by promotional symbolism extends into economic, political, military, social, and even religious life.

Take the concept of queen, for example, a complex symbolic entity. Unconscious associations include dignity, fertility, motherhood, nobility, wealth, leadership, and tradition. The symbolic queen is traceable back to prehistoric periods. At conscious levels, she may appear little more than an attractive, well-costumed woman.

The chairman of a Canadian university psychology department militantly rejected the idea of symbolic effects upon behavior. Rigorously disciplined in behaviorist empiricism, he religiously denied the validity of unconscious perception. His lengthy, mathematical-statistical analyses of experimental psychology were featured in many academic journals throughout the English-speaking

world. His students joked that it was academic suicide to bring up a psychological symptom in his seminars that could not be quantified. "What you see and hear is what you get," he frequently admonished. "That's all there is to it!" He considered symbolism an unsuitable subject for scientific investigation.

Queen Elizabeth II holds a symbolic position as head of state for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In spite of her titles, palaces, wardrobe, and heritage, she holds little power. She exists, is supported and utilized, as a symbol of state. The British Parliament and the prime minister actually govern Great Britain, which considers itself a constitutional monarchy. It is fascinating to observe the symbolic significance of royalty to British and Commonwealth peoples. The queen is deeply loved, revered, worshiped as a celebrity, and honored in a way people in nonmonarchical cultures find difficult to comprehend. Her celebrity status is comparable to media stars and athletic heroes in the U.S., but with the significant additional weight of archetypal symbolism. She represents all things to all people. It is indequate to attempt a critical discussion of the queen with Anglo-Canadians. Her symbolic significance is one of the remaining remnants of British imperial grandeur, power, and tradition.

In order to become a Canadian citizen, one must swear fealty to the queen. Commonwealth armed forces serve the queen. The queen is toasted at the beginning of formal dinners. Such symbolic devotion amuses French Canadians but is taken most seriously by the Anglos. On one Canadian tour, the queen traveled through Ontario by train. The psychology professor who so passionately denied the significance of symbols waited six hours in a heavy snowstorm with his family to glimpse the queen as her train passed through town. As many observers have noted, the more fiercely individuals defensively reject the idea that they are influenced by unconsciously perceived information, the more intensely subliminals seem to manage their lives.

In his *Letter IV*, Saint Augustine explained that "teaching accomplished with symbols feeds and stirs the fires of love which help humans excel and surpass themselves." Archetypal symbols appear as rich and varied as do life situations. Repetition of certain life events over thousands of years may have engraved these into

human predispositions or memory. The most important experiences are, of course, birth, reproduction, and death. These are the basic subjects around which most of the world's religions, philosophies, literatures, arts, and other deeply meaningful experiences focus. Even with modern pretensions to scientific objectivity, these fundamental experiences are still perceived as magical, their specific details and implications usually repressed from conscious awareness. These three fundamental human experiences still carry near universal ritualistic, spiritual, religious, and superstitious significance. Even within the officially atheistic U.S.S.R., solemn ritual ceremonies commemorate birth, marriage, and death. The symbolic significance of these three events appears vital to individual and social human survival. Every known religion, state, and social group has sought to control and utilize these three common human experiences for power or profit. Symbolic values related to these experiences powerfully affect behavior, while conscious awareness of these effects remains repressed.

As an archetypal symbol, birth has little to do with biological sex or reproduction. Unconsciously, birth symbolically relates to such human enigmas as *where did I come from, what was the beginning of existence, feeling, knowing, and why do I exist?* The human body and its functions, early in life, become the primary unconsciously perceived reality. Symbolic separation and independence from the mother also appears a basic, universal human dilemma.

Sexual reproduction unconsciously symbolizes, on one hand, a threat to independence and autonomy. On the other hand, however, are the deep symbolic implications of love, bonding, intimacy, search for identity, creativity, eternal life through reproduction, transference, and purification. The unconscious significance of sex within the human psyche extends far deeper than the silly banalities of ad media's pornographic, kick-trip-oriented manipulations.

The most fearsome, private event is death, both in reality and in symbolic terms. Death symbolizes the conclusion of human existence, the ultimate tragedy, the end of feeling, aspiration, expectation, the entrance into the truly great unknown, and—as alluded to in Genesis—"the return to dust."

Some theorists have tried to explain archetypes as genetically inherited information, "racial myths," in the terms of psychologist

Erich Fromm. Others, such as anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, explored the possibility that brain physiology collects information within a matrix that provides common symbolic significance.

Whatever the theory, and there are many, the literature of symbolism, mythology, and folklore provides a rich and fascinating exploration of a vital aspect of human experience. How the brain processes and stores nonverbal, unconscious, symbolic meaning may well be unknowable in any definitive sense. The mental processes involved may not lend themselves to factual or statistical-mathematical ways of knowing. Much about how the human brain functions may well be unknowable, except through theoretics. Nevertheless, humans are highly manipulable by almost anyone with some understanding of symbolic value systems.

The music video entitled "Valerie," by rock star Steve Winwood, thoroughly exploits archetypal symbols. In the lower left quadrant of the TV frame, one minute and forty-five seconds into the video, a cigarette appears to float, rocking back and forth, unrolls to flat cigarette paper, rolls again into a cigarette, the cigarette magically lights, transposes into a wooden match, the matchhead flames, and burns rapidly to the end. Cigarettes, subliminally, relate to death and self-destruction; the match lights, burns completely, and the flame is extinguished like the life of the smoker.

In another segment, one minute and fifteen seconds into the video, the letters *S-E-X* appear sequentially, then a large *X* appears, followed by several hooded, ghoulish figures, followed by the skull and crossbones in several designs, followed by a valentine heart, and finally a circle, symbol of unification—*love* and *death* subliminally invoked to sell a record album. All the video audience consciously perceives, if indeed they consciously perceive anything, are flickers of light in the lower left quadrant of the frame and Winwood singing in the right half of the frame.

Shortly after the "Valerie" video was released, the album it came from, *Chronicles*, was one of the top three best-sellers in the U.S.

### Interpret Rather than Define

Archetypal symbolism is also drawn from nature, human struggles against nature, and common biological processes. Similar sym-

bolic representations appear often in dreams, daydreams, fantasies, art forms, myths, legends, and folklore. Bluebeard's secret room, which his wives were forbidden to enter, symbolized his mind. The swan, because of its unusual reproductive behaviors, is symbolic of hermaphroditism, bisexuality, or gender ambiguity. The lion is symbolically the king of beasts because of its prodigious sexual appetites. Symbolism, however, is rarely simplistic. Symbols can be interpreted on a variety of levels, depending upon who uses them, when, and the context. Interpreters of symbolic meaning should distrust simple ready-made definitions. Symbols must be interpreted rather than defined.

Ad media purposely utilize symbolism to sell products, ideas, and personalities. The most intensely exploited, visible area of symbolic manipulation surrounds human reproduction. Sexuality is clearly the area of human experience most vulnerable to manipulation, exploitation, and the eventual development of neurotic and psychotic behaviors. This appears especially true in the acquisitive value systems of Western societies, but probably all humans share a similar vulnerability.

The Oscar Mayer sliced meat ad (fig. 13) is typical of archetypal symbolism applied to merchandising and consumer manipulation. The ad was widely and expensively published in national men's magazines such as *Esquire* and *Gentleman's Quarterly (GQ)*. The Italian-style beef slices on the left are styled to form a male genital, the cracked black pepper ham slices on the right form a somewhat smaller genital, though perhaps, as the copy explains, "more sharp and peppery." Remember, these symbols were directed at male unconscious perception. The female genital is symbolically represented in the center by smoked chicken breast slices. A recessive area has been subtly painted on the roasted chicken, suggesting female genitalia around the visceral cavity opening. Few macho males could resist the expectational fantasy of two men and a woman intermixing their genitalia. The Oscar Mayer ménage à trois reflects a sexual extravaganza, with male homosexual implications.

Symbolic imagery circumvents conscious, critical thought. It involves not only pictures but also words and numbers. The three symbolic representations in "Select Slices" unconsciously convey spiritual synthesis, childbirth, conflict resolution, harmony, and

unity—all associated with heaven or the Trinity. Had the artist utilized a two-, four-, or five-part arrangement, unconscious meanings would have changed. The "select" consumer who unconsciously identifies with the Oscar Mayer ad never consciously considers the expensive artwork significant.

The simple ad layout effectively optimizes the return on Oscar Mayer's media investment. The genital symbolism, in addition, is enhanced by the copy, which tells us that each meat is 95% fat-free. It would be far more medically important if the prospective consumers were 95% fat-free. U.S. readers have been trained to mindlessly accept, trust, and consciously ignore media. Any critical evaluation would quickly reduce the ad's effectiveness.

Almost any erect, long, stiff object can be deliberately engineered into a phallic symbol adaptable to mass-communication media. Audiences are rarely aware of what is going on. Awareness, of course, immediately puts the audience back into control, cancels or at least diminishes the ad's potential to modify behavior. For symbols to motivate sales, they must be consciously perceived as functional or logical. In ad media, phallic symbols are regularly developed from walking sticks, broom handles, fish, neckties, bananas, candles, flagpoles, skyscrapers, lampposts, whales, trees, obelisks, towers, lighthouses, space rockets, weapons, chimneys, cannons, elephant trunks, birds, swords, lances, spears, ejaculating champagne bottles, keys, cigarettes, cigars, automobiles, airplanes, electric guitars, microphones, thumbs and fingers—the list is endless.

Vaginal symbols are as rich in variety as the phallic. Female genitalia can be insinuated by almost any elliptical opening—a skin crevice under an arm, knee, elbow, or the rim of a glass or cup. In the Chivas Regal ad (fig. 7), the phallic bottle penetrates the elliptical rim of the whiskey glass. Similarly, the rim on the dip cup in the McDonald's ad (fig. 14) has been penetrated by the symbolic seminal fluid dripping from the Chicken McNugget. Betty Crocker's Super Moist cake mix (fig. 6) even carried the symbolic vagina into an anatomical replica—and got away with it, almost.

Casual examination of ads reveals an imaginative assortment of deliberate genital symbols. Curiously, the male genitalia ads appear directed at male consumers, the female genitalia ads at females.

Through trial and error, advertisers became convinced ads sell far better via this seeming contradiction. Psychological explanations are tentative. Arguments have been made that such ads appeal to latent homosexuality in both men and women, and that by increasing the taboo nature of the stimuli, consumers become more involved, responsive, and vulnerable. To the ad huckster, it really doesn't matter as long as the ad sells.

### Magic Alive in Media

In a thirty-second TV ad for Wishbone salad dressing, subliminal techniques and symbolism combine into a powerful mind massage. The brand label "Wishbone" alludes to magic, belief in resurrection, and, in Hebrew tradition, an indestructible tree and its inner, hidden, inviolable heart. Subliminal meanings are often hidden in video superimpositions—one scene fades as a new scene emerges. Subliminals are easily concealed in this transition. Unless the transition is taped and viewed one frame at a time, the flimflam remains hidden from consciousness. The Wishbone TV ad is a technological masterpiece.

The transition begins with a voluptuous model swimming in a tropical lagoon (fig. 17). As she shoots up from the water, arms and legs apart, the scene transfers to a head of lettuce held by two female hands. The thumbs holding the lettuce appear to press on the model's genital area (fig. 18). As the swimsuit model fades, the lettuce is split in half, symbolically as though a birth had occurred (fig. 19). Emerging from the V-split lettuce head, now appears the symbolic Wishbone bottle (fig. 20). The bottle design includes a male phallic upper portion and an elliptical female bottom—the symbolic unity of male and female in a romantic tropical setting. The scene changes to a head shot of the model, who appears to be licking the female portion of the bottle (fig. 21). As the bottle fades, the model's tongue appears as a tomato in her mouth (fig. 22). The four transitions occur sequentially in less than ten symbolically powerful seconds. Every detail records perceptually at unconscious levels. Tomatoes (also called love apples) and lettuce are symbolic of birth, spring, resurrection, abundance, fertility,

fecundity, and regeneration of life. Tomatoes symbolize love; lettuce symbolizes spring and a renewal of life.

Birth, reproduction, and finally death provide strong, underlying archetypal themes for numerous ads. The Seagram's Crown Royal broken bottle (fig. 15) is an example of a subliminal death appeal, inviting the drinker to self-immolate and destruct. Castration is another archetypal death symbol. The death wish is one of the most well-articulated theories in psychological literature—an innate compulsion to seek death, either actually or symbolically.

Numerous ads for alcohol and tobacco were illustrated in earlier studies of subliminal perception. A castrated penis, skulls, and nightmare monster faces appeared in a Johnny Walker ad (see Key, *The Clam-Plate Orgy*, figs. 6–16). The word *cancer* was embedded in a two-page Benson and Hedges cigarette ad (see Key, *Media Sexploitation*, figs. 41–42). Bizarre skulls, scorpions, dead birds, and sharks were embedded in Bacardi and Calvert ads (see Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, figs. 16–17). All these expensively manufactured images are archetypal symbols, personifications of death and self-destruction. They were expensively engineered, tested, and applied as marketing techniques. They sell, or are believed by the advertisers to sell. They have made a great deal of money for advertisers. What the ads accomplished for defenseless consumers can be perceived in public-health statistics.

Someone should be looking into death-wish or self-destruct compulsions evident in U.S. armament strategies. If archetypal death-wish symbolism successfully sells cigarettes, alcohol, and rock music, why not MX missiles, B-1 bombers, and other hardware in the armament pork barrels? The distinct possibility exists that both superpowers are simply acting out their collective death wish in unconscious conspiracy against themselves.

Human history has been a story of incredible survival skill in constant confrontation with suicidal behaviors. No human society has ever been continuous. Sooner or later, all have managed to self-destruct. Yet, they have continued to proliferate. Until quite recently, it was impossible to kill on the scale necessary to destroy everything. Human ingenuity finally triumphed. Suicidal potentialities today provide humans with their own final solution. Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) is not merely a theory. It is a reality, only minutes away from the press of a button or a phone

call. And, in the face of MAD, world leaders along with their scientific sycophants still mumble that there is no such thing as a human death wish.

When the final stupidity occurs—and it is reasonable to assume it will—the act will appear logical, rational, justifiable, and to some the fulfillment of destiny or biblical prophecy. Further, until the last few individuals painfully vomit themselves to death from radiation poisoning, the argument over whose fault it was will passionately continue. Millions of dollars are regularly invested in research into massive destruction; virtually nothing so far has been invested in the study of human survival.

No one has, as yet, made serious long-term investigations into the eventual effects of ad-media flimflam upon human personality, mental health, behavior, and survival. The U.S. blindly allows the commercial establishment to inflict avaricious self-interest upon the entire population. Virtually no one appears to hear the faint ticking of our time running out.

## 7 | CAUSE AND EFFECT— THE GREATEST ILLUSION OF ALL

What we cannot think, we cannot think; we cannot therefore say what we cannot think.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

If I do not know I know, I think I do not know.

R. D. Laing, *Knots*

Only childish people imagine that the world is what we think it is.

C. G. Jung, *Analytical Psychology*

Humans exhibit an inherited predisposition to believe that for every effect there is a known or knowable cause. The common myth holds that some single or multiple occurrence precedes a particular event, without which the event would have been impossible. With the occurrence, the event becomes inevitable. The cause-and-effect expectation functions at both conscious and unconscious levels within individuals.

Should people have difficulty in isolating a cause, they will, as a general practice, invent one with words, usually by a verbal generalization. *Rain today (effect), the weather again (cause).* “Weather,” an enormously complex abstraction, is largely *unknown*, perhaps even *unknowable*. Contrary to popular fictions, weather is a random, unpredictable phenomenon. An expectation that coincidence is unlikely to be accidental is likewise an aspect of this innate, hereditary perceptual pattern. *Can you believe that lawyer was just accidentally in the hospital when the ambulance arrived?* What has been called the “when-then connection” is a basic ingredient in what is considered common sense.

Attempts to explain or account for coincidence appear common to all peoples, though there are variations in the way they attempt to handle the question. The Chinese, for example, evolved a different approach from the straight-line, simplistic cause-and-effect reasoning of the West, often attributed to Aristotle. Chinese logicians noticed certain types of events appear to cluster at certain times. Chinese theories of medicine, philosophy, and even architecture were based on a science of meaningful coincidence. Chinese theories did not question what causes what. They inquired instead into what “likes to occur” with what. Both Asiatic and Western systems, however, sought verbal solutions to the question of coincidence. Both systems produced verbalized fictions that attempted to explain events in reference to known, unknown, and unknowable causation.

Common sense is based on the simple proposition that the effect of a cause must follow that cause. *Effect* cannot precede *cause*. The proposition can be stated, *After this, therefore because of this!* Unfortunately, experience often contradicts what is assumed common sense. Vicious circles of human conflict, in which the sequence of events is nonlinear, are the most frequent example. The effect, in a nonlinear conflict, feeds back and reinitiates its own cause. Marital

conflicts often focus and turn upon themselves in a vicious circle. The starting point is forgotten and, even if remembered, no longer matters. The seventy-year conflict between Soviet communism and Western entrepreneurial economics is another circular, self-perpetuating conflict, as are the Catholic-Protestant struggle in Northern Ireland, the Lebanese Christian-Moslem warfare, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Once established, circular, self-sustaining sequences continue indefinitely, evolving outside and beyond beginning and end, cause and effect. Throughout human history, common sense has often—if not usually—shown itself uncommonly senseless, often murderously so. Commonsense defensive strategies rationalize, disguise, and attempt to dismiss contradictions. Humans persist in reasoning only at a level of the seemingly obvious. Repression, forgetting that we have forgotten, takes care of the other loose ends—paradoxes, contradictions, and exceptions.

The anatomy of cause and effect is rarely examined carefully. If we do, or do not do, *this*, then *that* is certain to occur. If we do not invest \$100 million fighting communism in Nicaragua, the U.S. will soon be invaded by Soviet forces. Silly propositions such as this are acted on each day by millions of people and, most embarrassingly, by high government officials. Such simplisms are nonsense, rhetorical propaganda, and usually recognized as such by those who promote them. Considering human gullibility, especially as it has been conditioned and channeled by the ad media, such cause-and-effect reasoning provides effective strategies of persuasion and manipulation. It exploits human weakness, fear of the unknown, paranoia, insecurities, doubts, and all of the other emotional instabilities. Fear of the unknown or unknowable usually drives humans into the greedy hands of seers who pretend to know the future. Prophecies and inside knowledge strangely serve only the self-interests of prophets.

For every effect, were the real world as logical as words appear, there must indeed be a cause. There could even be multiple causes. Further, there are quite likely unknowable causes or causes that cannot be verbally defined. The worst possible scenario involves situations with a combination of multiple unknown and unknowable causes—the most common situation humans encounter. Also, perceptions of causation can be unconsciously motivated. Simplistic cause-and-effect rationalization could constitute mankind's most

dangerous myth. When *causality* is linked with *objective reality* fantasies to create a finality—an ultimate conclusion not to be undone or altered—the connection could be lethal.

That such innate, taken-for-granted mental structures exist—through which disastrous conclusions, evaluations, and analysis are regularly formulated—is generally unknown or, worst of all, repressed. The instinctual human need to draw simplistic cause-and-effect conclusions remains hidden because individuals do not want consciously to know their vulnerability to errors and misinterpretations. In the immortal words of the *Titanic*'s brave captain, “Even God could not sink this ship!”

### The Flimflam of Because

Scottish philosopher David Hume believed the verbal concept *because* was totally unverifiable and unexplainable as a part of language and thought. One cannot, according to Hume's reasoning, assume an airplane crashed *because* the engines failed, even though such incidents are reported in this way every day in media throughout the world. Such reports only confirm that journalists and readers need to perceive the world in simplistic cause-and-effect relationships. Such reports say far more about the reporters and their audiences than they do about the events described. All that could be stated reliably about the airplane crash, on the basis of perceivable known, unknown, and unknowable fact, is that when the engines failed, the airplane crashed. The actual *cause* or *causes*—known, unknown, and unknowable—are unavailable and could remain so. Hume argued that the verbal concept *because* was, in itself, erroneous, illogical, foolish, mythological, and often highly dangerous. For example, cause-and-effect medicine is simplistic nonsense. Organisms respond as whole, integrated entities—from causes known, unknown, and unknowable.

Simplistic *cause-and-effect* assumptions are questionable, even though acted on with apparent success in a practical, common-sense framework. Anyone who keeps track of his or her unsuccessful decisions based on *cause-and-effect* conscious assumptions will discover an ego-shattering high score. Humans do not keep such scores, of course. They consciously note a preponderance of

wins, repressing or denying the losses, *Cause and effect* are also verbally formed after the fact, as a rationalization, rather than before. For example, the popular assumption that the moon's orbit *causes* the rise and fall of tides is false. The complex, only partially understood relationship between the earth and moon suggests that earth's tides actually slow down the moon's orbit. Another false, though profitable, assumption in the U.S. is that industries succeed *because* of consumer preferences. However—as this book points out—consumers are manipulated by the industries in a complex, culturally integrated media system that supplies consumers with the fantasy that they are in control. In experimental psychology, rats are believed to behave in a certain way *because* of experimenters' clever controls, but it is rarely discussed that the limitations of rat behavior mainly determine experimental procedure. The inherent limitations of human assumptions, behaviors, and observations are also virtually never considered a part of scientific method as scores of simplistic, verbal, *cause-and-effect* assumptions annually pour forth in the name of science, progress, and profit.

The *because* dilemma appears to be a product of the evolutionary learning of many species as they evolved. Conditioned reflexes are one plausible explanation, but always be careful with cause-and-effect explanations of cause and effect. Whenever events or coincidences repeat frequently enough, an individual expects they will continue. The coincidence can actually be relatively infrequent for a predictive link to become established.

Nobel prize-winning physiologist Ivan Pavlov taught dogs to salivate in the expectation of food when a buzzer was sounded. For the animals, the buzzer became a symbolic representation of food. Humans can similarly be trained to salivate to bells, buzzers, and bugles. They can also be conditioned to salivate to pictures and music in radio and television commercials. Humans will even salivate in a delayed-time response, days or weeks after viewing a TV commercial, when they perceive the brand label in a supermarket (Poetzle effect). Such training easily develops ritual behaviors around the stimulus. Pavlov's dogs behaved much like wolves. Once food was given to the dominant animal, subordinate dogs begged for a share. They displayed ritual whining, tail-wagging, sycophantic slinking, head-lowering, and throat exposure to the dominant animal. The ritualized animal behavior also oc-

curred eventually when only the buzzer sounded. The animals had learned simple cause-effect relationships connecting buzzer, ritual behaviors, and food.

Harvard psychologist B. F. Skinner kept pigeons in a closed environment where food was released at random intervals. The pigeons connected their own movements with food deliveries. The purely random coincidence of food delivery eventually initiated a learning process. When a particular movement was perceived as part of a feeding interval, Skinner's pigeons confirmed their expectations that pellets arrived because of something they had accomplished. Even pigeons had to believe food was a product of acts they had initiated. They could not accept the reality that their food was controlled by outside forces over which they had no influence or control. Events such as a certain wing, body, or claw movement coincidental with the arrival of a food pellet slowly evolved a learned behavior, a cause-effect relationship. The expectation of a connection between their particular movement and food increased and intensified, regardless of what else occurred in the environment.

Skinner described the behavior that appeared to produce food as "a group of crazy pigeons—one circled constantly to the left, another kept spreading its right wing, another moved its head from side to side." These repeated behaviors, of course, eventually appeared to produce food pellets—which would have occurred with or without the behavior. The behavior merely provided the pigeons with the fantasy that they were in control. Cause and effect, for the pigeons, became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once ritualized behavior becomes established, it is very difficult to change it in either animals or humans.

Anyone who doubts the power of ritualized cause-and-effect expectations can observe them among family or friends. The patterns are discernible around eating, drinking, or reproductive behaviors. We are taught to see consumption of various products—smoking, drinking, eating, costuming, and even TV watching—as *causes* with fantasized *effects*.

After World War II, New Guinea mountain tribes evolved a religious cult that worshiped airplanes. The warplanes that had once brought tribal prosperity had disappeared. Tribal groups constructed shrines from pieces of old airplanes and discarded scrap.

The junk was fabricated to look roughly like airplanes. Eventually occasional planes did fly over, more frequently at some times than at others. The shrines became increasingly elaborate, and cult membership increased as the power and validity of the cult were confirmed. A new religion was born.

Frequent, taken-for-granted ritual behaviors are easily observable—the recitation of Hail Marys, rosary-bead counts, nightly prayers, knocking on wood, reading the daily horoscope, fasting on certain special days, placing the fork on the left side of the plate, word or number magic, carrying a good-luck charm, rarely missing a certain television show, carefully reading the ads, the news, the weather reports, et cetera. Whether in Pavlov's buzzer, in a New Guinea airplane shrine, or attending expensively created ad fantasies, the cause-and-effect symbolism promises sexual gratification, security, good fortune, social acceptability, love, happiness, eternal life. Ads will promise you anything. Chants, incantations, curses, and blessings are as much in daily use today as they were in primitive societies. "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should!"

### Verbal Magic

Ernest Cassirer wrote in *Language and Myth* that identification between labels or names and persons or things is the fundamental mechanism of mythmaking. Ali Baba opened the magic door in the mountain with "Open Sesame!" Rumpelstiltskin was defeated in his work for the devil when the princess learned to pronounce his name. As exhaustively documented by J. G. Frazer in his work *The Golden Bough*, primitive peoples surround themselves with endless word taboos. Like their modern counterparts, they manufacture verbal amulets or prayers to protect themselves from evil spirits, such as, "Ban takes the worry out of being close!" American Indians, whose terror of the dead was intense, never spoke the names of the dead—many of which derived from animals or natural objects. So they constantly had to invent new words for common objects, and their vocabularies became endlessly confused with different names for the same things, along with over 100 tribal dialects and languages. J. P. Harrington of the Smithsonian Institute wrote, "The more wars, the more dead, the more new

names, the more dialects, the more foreigners, the more wars, the more dead . . ."

Consciously and unconsciously, humans are still victimized by word magic, ritual behaviors, and immersion in an ocean of fantasized cause-and-effect delusions. Modern, educated individuals think themselves liberated from the darkness of superstition and ignorance. Yet they mindlessly accept words or phrases intentionally designed to camouflage reality. U.S. ad media carefully avoid factual, measurable descriptions of product qualities; they emphasize flattering descriptions of the consumer. A list of magic words and phrases can easily be garnered from any commercial publication. Word magic sells products, people, political ideology, religious faith, and everything else sold in the U.S.

Squeezably Soft Charmin

Be a Pepper

Almost Home cookies

Brawny paper towels

Purina Tender Vittles

Chiquita Pops

Just My Size pantyhose

Fantastik cleaner

The Spirit of Marlboro

The Taste of Merit

An American Revolution—Dodge

I Need to Be Accepted—In Touch cards

Dashingly Suave Cuervo tequila

Nocturnes de Caron perfume

The Friendly Skies of United

Publicity and ad hype provide a pervasive philosophical system that dominates thought and feelings for millions. Consumption, as an end in itself, becomes a substitute for democratic idealism.

The freedom to choose what one wears, drives, or eats replaces meaningful social, economic, or political alternatives. Commercial hypes conceal much of what is corrupt, authoritarian, unjust, and cruelly exploitive. Such hype also muffles and distorts clear perceptions of the rest of the world.

Freedom Is a Datsun!

China/Orient, Personal Pleasures, National Treasures, Pampering, Adventuring, with Royal Viking Line

When You Take on the World, You're Not Alone with American Express

Take Time Out from the Real World to Explore the Reel World Through Moviebreak

Camel Filters, It's a Whole New World!

The Spirit of the Empire, Bass Ale!

Freedom Is a Maxi-Pad!

Revolutionary, The Perfect Pantyhose!

Consciously and unconsciously, contemporary men and women are circumspect about words for fear of supernatural reprisals, every bit as much as their prehistoric or medieval forebears. They act as if words themselves had power to control human affairs. In a tragic sense, words do have power to initiate self-fulfilling prophecies. During numerous U.S. administrations, meetings with Soviet diplomats endlessly disputed definitions of nuclear-weapon disarmament, in a childlike faith that correct verbal formulations would magically bring eternal peace and security. As every diplomat knows, words are largely irrelevant unless there is a will among participants to make agreements work.

Over many centuries, lucky numbers three and seven held superstitious fascination for humans. Seven is mentioned many times in the bible; three symbolizes the Trinity. The devil is associated with 666. God allegedly made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. For many centuries, there were only seven known planets. The seventh son is still believed to possess special talents.

Thirteen is considered so unlucky that many hotels do not number thirteenth floors. Virtually all numbers have, at one period or another, held magical significance. Odd numbers were considered masculine, even numbers feminine. Lucky numbers are used for gambling, license plates, telephone numbers, or lottery tickets. Consumers often pay extra for lucky numbers.

A brief visit to Nevada or Atlantic City casinos confirms widespread belief in magic numbers. Casino dealers and owners know, of course, that anyone who believes such nonsense is a loser. A frequently heard comment among casino employees is "Luck is for losers!" Publicly, of course, they are paid to tell a different story. Gamblers are always given change with the prayerful admonition, "Good luck!" Were they to have good luck, the casino would lose money.

Throughout evolution, humans—not unlike Professor Skinner's pigeons—insisted nothing happens by itself. Threats loom everywhere, hiding in the dark, invisible to the victims. The need to appease gods, control destiny, explain the unexplainable or unknowable, provided a foundation for cultures, languages, religions, laws, and thousands of superstitions. This constant human need for explanations of *cause* and *effect* made fortunes for ad media. As P. T. Barnum's famous comment held, "There is one born every minute!" Modern ad media took over where Barnum left off, vastly expanding the gullible population.

The uncertainties of science, philosophy, and day-to-day perceived realities can be replaced by unquestioning faith in predestination, a greater power, prophecy, or even by a heavenly endorsed political ideology. Many national leaders work diligently to have God on their side. The process is also a convenient means of scapegoating, blaming misfortunes upon fate, bad luck, or God's punishment—expedients to escape individual responsibility for failure.

Popular media exploitation of chauvinistic nationalism for power and profit—a major U.S. industry—is fueled by magic words and symbols. Flag ceremonies, national anthems, and endless simplistic cause-and-effect rhetoric camouflage selfishness, exploitation of the helpless, avarice, and vicious behavior that violates all human standards of decent conduct. Patriotism, not unlike religious fanaticism,

frequently obscures, diffuses, and represses reality-oriented perceptions of what is going on. Inhuman atrocities have been excused by the platitude, "Someone had to do it!" Human vulnerability to media manipulation persists, proliferates, and grows potentially more devastating each year.

### Predicting the Unpredictable

Another aspect of cause-and-effect mythology is *predictability*. Prophecy has been replaced in modern fantasies with predictability—which sounds more scientific. The need to predict has been discussed as a genetically inherited drive system. Nothing in the world is predictable! *Nothing!* Anyone who could accurately predict only one simple thing could eventually obtain or achieve whatever riches or power they desired. Predictability is a myth, a myth constructed out of verbal, mathematical, or statistical identifications, excluded middle options, and ignored contradictions. Myth, of course, universally disregards *macro*, *micro*, and *submicro* levels of perception and the conscious-unconscious perceptual dynamic.

Statistical probability has nothing to do with prediction. Statistics only attempt to describe probable outcomes. They do not—in any way—predict. A major research industry survives on profitable misinterpretations of probability. Every professional gambler has bet on odds 99–1 in their favor—and lost. For a long time, crystal balls, tea leaves, astrological tables, and Ouija boards served the need for prediction. They were cheap and readily available. Predictions almost always reduce tension brought on by uncertainty. Unfortunately, these devices were eventually perceived as unscientific. Tea leaves and the like were replaced by computers, probability statistics, Ph.D. seers, and think tanks. Modern predictions are usually hedged through carefully worded evasions or double meanings. The prediction industry succeeded. Those who took the predictions seriously usually did not. Both the Oval Office and the Kremlin are crowded with predictors who are called economists, security and political advisers, military scientists, population analysts, et cetera.

The use of Aristotelian syllogistic logic is ingeniously applied.

If *this* happens, and *this* happens, and *this* happens, then *this* will happen. Such statements can be elaborated into complex, seemingly logical scenarios. Unfortunately, they are invariably wishful thinking. Predictions are usually impossible to pin down to factual specifics. One point is important. Predictions can contribute to desired outcomes as self-fulfilling prophecies if people can be manipulated to accept them as *truth*. As numerous authors have pointed out, the ultimate function of prediction or prophecy is not to tell the future but to make it.

Such areas as economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, and political, military, and computer science have a laughable history of failed, quickly forgotten predictions. Even the weather service does not reliably predict weather conditions. It forecasts only under certain favorable, highly qualified, probable conditions. Weather is an unpredictable random occurrence. Like newspaper horoscopes, media weather reports are well sponsored and profitable, adding credibility to those who publish and broadcast them. All have the same basic U.S. Weather Service information, but are interpreted in relation to audience variables. Such interpretations have more to do with telling audiences what they wish to hear, in the interest of advertisers, than with the actual weather.

Any attempt to predict the future courts disaster. Knowledgeable people hedge predictions carefully. Should predictions turn out to be *true*, or in a way that can be interpreted as *true*, they validate the predictor. If the prediction was *false*, it is forgotten, ignored, or rationalized verbally. As predictive systems are human perceptual constructions, the system is usually protected when results do not work out.

Once individuals understand and accept the subjectivity of human perception, they acquire enormous power over their lives. They can protect themselves from manipulation or—as many appear to do—go into the business of managing the perceptions of others. Famed publisher Henry Luce ordered his editorial staffs to "disregard the nonsense of objectivity." He told them they were "paid to draw conclusions and conclusions they had damned well better draw." The statement caused a small stir in publishing circles at the time, but was probably courageous. Most of Luce's competition still hustled naïve readers with the mythology of objective

truth. Many still perpetuate the myth. Anyone willing to accept the simplism of "unbiased truth" is prepared to believe "McDonald's does it all for you!"

### The Managers of Cause and Effect

Environmental catastrophes cast thousands of species into the scrap barrel of extinction. No known species, however, has engineered itself into the ultimate disaster. Species extinction, as far as can be determined, was always the result of external forces—climate, disease, or environmental disasters. Humans may be the exception. Through constructed perceptions of language and culture, superficially considered instruments of education and progress, humans may already have condemned themselves to extinction. They display extreme vulnerability to persuasion, flattery, cause-and-effect fantasizations, and self-fulfilling prophecies. The manipulation of these elements can result in profit and power, though they constitute civilization's Achilles' heel.

Day after day, year after year, decade after decade, the U.S. population is indoctrinated with assumptions and expectations that for every *effect* there must be a *cause*. Each individual ad conveys an inherent, simplistic cause-and-effect assumption. Ads educate about logic and thought processes, as well as values. Causation is also a major preoccupation of news and information sources, books, TV soap operas and sitcoms, rock music lyrics, political oratory, and even university education. It is virtually impossible to find cause and effect qualified as known, unknown, unknowable, or in combinations of the three.

Reality-oriented writing might succeed in an off-Broadway play or in a novel published for an elite readership but could never make it in the fantasy-oriented mainstream. A carefully qualified presentation would destroy commercial broadcast or published media. Audiences have been trained to want simple, direct messages with as few reality distractions as possible. When this cultural orientation translates into the selection of political leadership, the delineation of foreign policy, military expenditures, national security issues, public health and social policies, education, and eco-

nomic planning and strategies, the society functions at the intellectual level of a John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, or Sylvester Stallone movie. Simple, often violent answers to enormously complex questions are readily available, with multiple-choice answers limited to a handful of simplistic verbal alternatives.

One-dimensional, simplistic, cause-and-effect thinking is one of the most dangerous forces on earth. Through available media technology, ideologues can manipulate any decision or policy to appear as the collective will of the people. Nobel laureate, philosopher, and mathematician Bertrand Russell concluded, "The reason physics ceased to look for causes is that, in fact, there are no such things." The only real certainty within the grasp of human perception is uncertainty.

Uncertainty could become the source of endless human joy, innovation, creativity, excitement, multiple perspectives, and the challenge of intellectual adventure. The only real certainty in human life is death. As long as uncertainty is feared, however, humans will remain submissive pawns in the struggle for profit and power.

### The Disregarded Unknowable

In one attempt to study simplistic cause-and-effect reasoning, test subjects were given several simple, interpersonal quandaries. Less than 10% were able to qualify causation as unknown or unknowable. Their self-assurance was awesome as they defined and delineated the cause of every stated effect. Certainty over causation often appeared arrogant. The few who appeared concerned about unknown elements of causation were science- or mathematics-oriented.

Strangely, however, only 1% of the subjects dealt with the notion of the unknowable. North American culture seems to ignore the perceptual reality that much, if not most, of both a *cause* and an *effect* will remain unknowable, at least verbally unknowable. Little of what appears evident about biological, physical, and psychological realities is known and understood or even can be. The perceptual process through which knowing is possible is itself poorly

understood. Most of this great unknown is quite possibly unknowable, at least in the terms of knowing that prevail at the moment.

When humans think they think they *know* why events, situations, or actions occur around them, they could be in great peril. The simplistic structure of *cause* and *effect* is everywhere in the illustrations in this book. The basic premise of an ad is universal—buy products, brands, ideas, and people. What you perceive about the benefits (*effect*) of that purchase usually has nothing to do with the actual brand or product (*cause*). The principal effect of an ad is actually the promise of fulfillment. It includes endless sensual delights and indulgences of the flesh, fantasy escapes, and self-adulation—"Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?"

One frequent consequence of cause-and-effect fantasy is that nothing at all actually happens, the promise remains unfulfilled—the cause is ineffective. No perceivable effect results from cause. Like unfulfilled predictions, a missing effect can be camouflaged by further searching out causes until one is discovered that fits the desired effect.

As a large portion of ads pander to the baser motives, the actual consequences of the effect are frequently the opposite of the promised effect—the loser syndrome. Dr. William Masters, who pioneered research in human sexuality, once commented, "When a person's primary motive in life is to get *screwed*, they usually end up *screwed* in the fullest sense of the word." The promise of getting screwed is the basic motivating premise in ads.

The Tanqueray gin ad (fig. 5) promises subliminally to improve your erection. Unhappily, alcohol is a chemical depressant that accomplishes the opposite—chemically induced castration. The Betty Crocker Super Moist cake mix ad (fig. 6) promises to supermoisten the housewife's vagina. Sadly, however, anyone who consumes enough of the high-fat and -sodium content pastry may gain so much weight real sexual experiences will become few and far between. The Chivas Regal ad (fig. 7) promises to get a man's penis gently stroked, but either by himself or by another man. The promise of Soloflex ads (figs. 10–12) also appears to be adulation of men by other men. Buy *Time*, the cover promises (*cause*), and

save yourself from a sexualized Gaddafi (fig. 9), who murderously wants to KILL (*effect*). The *Time* issue contained numerous supportive stories on the U.S. military buildup, military enforcement of foreign-policy objectives, and the noble crusade against terrorism—all supported by taxpayer money flowing massively into the coffers of large corporations who advertise.

## 8 | THE EXPECTATIONS OF STEREOTYPES

*My expectations of your expectations of my expectations of your expectations should send both of us screaming in opposite directions.*

Anonymous

Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.

Alexander Pope, *Letter to Gay*

The remedy in the U.S. is not less liberty but real liberty—and an end to the brutal intolerance of churchly hooligans and flag-waving corporations, and all the rest of the small but bloody despots who have made the word Americanism a synonym for coercion and legal crime.

Archibald MacLeish, *The Nation*, Dec. 4, 1937

The primary expectation communicated by ad media is sex. Ads in the women's periodicals focus almost exclusively on sex, escape, food, and more sex. Men's magazines focus on sex, escape, power, dominance, and status—most of which, as in the women's media, ties back into sex. TV is the most pervasive educational force in the U.S. A 1987 study of the three networks by Louis Harris found 65,000 sexual references broadcast annually in ad and program content during prime afternoon and evening hours. Sexual references averaged twenty-seven per hour, including nine kisses, five hugs, ten sexual innuendos, and one or two references directly to sexual intercourse and deviant sexual practices. Clearly, sex sells the ads that sell the products in the commercials.

By contrast, Harris had to use fractions to count hourly references to birth control (less than one-fiftieth per hour), sexually transmitted diseases (one-tenth per hour), and sex education (one-seventeenth per hour). The study found no ads or announcements for contraceptive products or services, except for the very few AIDS announcements. Portrayals of sex were overly romanticized and unrealistic. Few messages appeared about responsibility, sexual behavior consequences, and pregnancy prevention. Nearly eight in ten adults surveyed thought TV should present birth-control material. A typical TV viewer saw nearly 14,000 instances of sexual material annually, but only 165 counterbalanced references to education in sexuality, sexual diseases, birth control, and abortion—a ratio of one in eighty-five. Sex sells purchasing, as well as social, behaviors. Harris studied only the obvious conscious sexual content. Had he investigated the subliminal dimensions, the numbers would have been even more overwhelming. The commercial media clearly control value systems and human expectations in the nation's reproductive behaviors.

Print media offer an opportunity to study the more subtle technology of sexual manipulation. Lights and shadows, line curvatures, skin and hair textures, eye positions, subtle, minute features are meticulously detailed. Human perception is extremely sensitive to the most minute detail in pictures—far more sensitive than anyone has suspected. A single print ad can cost \$50,000 for art production and require months to manufacture, and TV ads cost \$50,000 to \$250,000—all ultimately paid for by consumers. Photographs are rarely published without extensive retouching, even

news photos. The final reproduction of a reproduction of a reproduction has nothing remotely to do with the original photograph. Countless details affect the *expectations* with which consumers unconsciously identify. Most of the *expectational* aspect of perception is subliminal.

The Kent ad (fig. 23) appeared on the back cover of *Time* magazine and numerous other national publications. *Time* charges roughly \$175,000 for a back cover of their national edition. The model play-acts a successful businessman at his private tennis club. In the left background appears an executive's briefcase and tennis racket, at right gym lockers. A well-pressed suit and tie wait behind the model. He has dried with a rich, textured towel after tennis and shower, and a freshly lit cigarette hangs from his mouth. His nude lower body is out of the picture but is projectively *filled in* by the viewer. Filling in is both a conscious and unconscious perceptual process, long studied by Gestalt psychologists, and viewers are always a part of the perceptual construction in ads. The model's posture is one of display. His eyes look right, seemingly off into space, thoughtful; they have been retouched, the pupils enlarged as they are during emotional or sexual arousal. The artist had also added a touch of dissonance, the priming device for subliminal information. The model's left eye focuses upon a different point in space than does the right. The cigarette does not hang down passively, nor point upward in an erect position. The angle suggests the early stages of arousal, now that work and exercise are done. The model is suntanned, athletic, hair still wet from the shower, his face lightly lined with maturity, an outdoor person. Curly hair identifies with pubic hair. The model's expectations have been subtly engineered into the picture. After he has smoked a Kent, relaxed, and dressed, his immediate expectation is of a sexual encounter. The word *SEX* appears repeatedly embedded in his hair, on his body, in the towel texture. Retouch air-brushing is apparent in facial details—especially the eyebrows, lines under the eyes, and in the line of the right jaw.

The above are subtle details, extremely important to the ad artist, cigarette company, and to the ad's sales potential. Consumers read the ad at a glance or, at most, in several seconds. These details—so expensively incorporated—never consciously register. Male readers can unconsciously react in either of two directions, or

perhaps both at the same time. They may identify with the model's apparent expectations: "I am like him, we are the same. I like sex after exercise. Kent is a way to relax. Get it together, anticipating sex." Or they may feel latent, unconscious homosexual attraction toward the model. His neck, breasts, and genitals are displayed to the male reader. As body-building magazine publishers know, and have long studied, men are strongly attracted to the bodies of other men. This attraction can be conscious or unconscious. A similar strategy was utilized in the Soloflex ads (figs. 10–12). The powerful appeal aims at latent or repressed homosexual tendencies shared by most—if not all—men.

The ad was only a momentary experience for most of the over 25 million *Time* readers. The manipulative strategy, however, powerfully affected many individuals—even nonsmokers. To justify the million-dollar investment, enough Kents had to be sold by the ad to produce corporate profit. Had there been the slightest doubt about the ad's sales potential, it could never have been published.

Fantasy expectations are similarly used in ads aimed at women. Like men, women are relentlessly manipulated into product use, brand preferences, and ad identities through appeals to reproductive behavior expectations. These frequently take curious twists. Little is ever what it appears to be. The constant manipulation can evoke great confusion, dissatisfaction, and even conscious physical discomfort.

The Alberto mousse ad shown in figure 24 appeared in *Cosmopolitan* and other women's publications. The expectations communicated by the three models are libidinous. The *ménage à trois* includes a woman with masculine hair and square, masculine ear decorations. She appears enamored of the male model, lovingly caressing his neck with her right hand; her left hand is hidden from view, but its position is perceptually filled in at the unconscious level. The male model looks invitingly toward the reader as he gently caresses the foreground model's feminine hair. The foreground model stares directly, almost defiantly, at the reader. Her carefully crafted expression is invitational and challenging. "Join us!" her expression reads. "If you dare!" The models are formally costumed for an expensive night on the town. The *ménage à trois*, or *à quatre* if you include the reader, appears a logical expectation for anyone who purchases a phallic bottle of Alberto

Mousse European styling foam. La mousse, in French, means froth, lather, foam—seminal imagery.

That expensively produced ad was carefully retouched. Facial expressions were constructed, hair lines retouched, the man's right hand painted. If the hand is blocked off, the thumb appears an erect penis, pointing upward, not at either of the two female models, but narcissistically at the male model. The masculine woman's box earring was also painted into the picture. Her *box* hangs from her ear, available to all. The question of *who* does *what* to *whom* in the ménage could keep a *Cosmo* reader fantasizing all night if the details were consciously perceived. They are not. The hours of expensive art production and planning were intended for instantaneous, unconscious perception. Without unconscious perception, ads are a waste of time, resources, and money. The carefully designed expectations of the three models sold thousands of gallons of mousse without anyone catching on to the game. What all this flimflam inflicts upon the personality, emotional health, and real-life expectations of the female reader is awesome.

Ad expectations always remain unfulfilled, except in fantasies. Many ads play specifically to masturbatory fantasies, continually placing new, more bizarre expectations before naïve consumers. Reproductive behavior for many consumers remains at immature fantasy levels throughout their lives. Sexual fantasization operates the ad-media vending machines. Sexual realities, on the other hand, escalate toward a dessert of unfulfilled and unfulfillable expectations.

### The Potency of Expectation

The above are typical of the half million ads perceived annually by everyone in the country. It is foolish to assume this constant, deep immersion in fantasy sexualization has no effect on *who* people think they are, *where* they perceive themselves going, and *what* they have become as a nation or culture. Ads condition humans to view others as stereotypes, rather than as individuals. The de-humanized regimentation of expectations for self and others makes real-life relationships into our society's most perishable commodity.

Reality can never compete with fantasy in a world where fantasies control basic value systems.

There exist no purposeless communications between humans. Everything that perceptually transpires—most at the unconscious level—affects human relationships. We interact sensitively and continuously both at conscious and unconscious levels. In the media-dominated culture, interpersonal expectations are modeled on stereotypes.

Interpersonal communication involves an enormous range of tactics and strategies, role assumptions, attempts to maneuver others into complementary or subsidiary roles, and frequent variations in the ways individuals portray themselves. All human behavior, whether from conscious or unconscious motives, is basically *goal-seeking*. Self-interest is involved in even the most altruistic behavior. The question of motives is essential to make sense out of human communication. Ad motives are simple and singular—to sell, to sell, to sell, ad infinitum, at both conscious and unconscious levels. What commercial manipulators try to do can be measured against this single motive. Success or failure is empirically, rigorously, and scientifically measured against effort, expenditures, and sales.

In literature and fine art—on the other hand—motivation is never simplistic. The artist's motives are extremely complex. In one sense, the great artists and writers similarly wanted to sell—their work, abilities, and reputations. But other strong motivational forces appear. Da Vinci, according to Sigmund Freud, reflected his homosexuality in his creative work. Pablo Picasso was a lifelong communist (though a multimillionaire), and through his work runs a strong social commentary on human greed, conformity, and the regimentation of capitalist society. Picasso also had monumental difficulties with women; this is reflected in much of his creative production. The motives behind a Picasso painting are diffuse, complex, often contradictory, and mirror the artist's unique perception of the world and its peoples. Most of what is considered significant art and literature is complex. Perhaps this is why art survives over centuries as meaningful human experience.

Though the technology of ads and public relations is awesome, the strategies brilliant, complex, devious, exhaustively researched, and expensively executed, the motive remains simplistic. The mo-

tive is always manipulation in the interest of power and profit, not enlightenment or deeper insight into the human condition.

Expectations in human communication are largely unconscious reciprocal influences. We are all influenced by expectations at levels of perception over which we have little control or awareness. Whenever someone is categorized, labeled, or role-defined—stereotyped—specific behaviors, characteristics, and actions are expected. Various groups are expected to behave in certain more-or-less specific ways within any given cultural system. If they fail to comply, a variety of reactions can be anticipated—surprise, anger, disappointment, fear, even disgust. Should expectations be inconsistently fulfilled, the reaction is unpredictable but will probably be aggressively negative.

Instead of worrying vainly about being liked, loved, or respected, individuals should concern themselves with what others *expect* of them. Expectations rule the future of relationships. Once expectations are consciously known, deliberated, and utilized, individuals achieve more control over situations.

There are usually sanctions applied to perceived violators of conscious and unconscious expectations. Deviants or rule-breakers are punished, sometimes severely (penalties are more restrained if violators have a recognized high status). Most people in any culture seek predictable relationships, where expectations are reliably fulfilled. Deviants are avoided.

In both athletic and intellectual competition, the manipulation of the opponent's expectations is vital to success. In popular sports, skilled players pit brute strength, perseverance, and one-dimensional reasoning against each other until one becomes exhausted, over-powered, and vanquished. Mindless, battering brutality is portrayed endlessly in U.S. athletic arenas.

It is curious that U.S. culture, almost uniquely, features athletic confrontations that test strength, brutality, and blind commitment, cultural throwbacks to early frontier experiences. Even more curiously, our international relationships traditionally rely upon threats, force, a big stick, rather than upon the more sophisticated skills of arbitration, persuasion, compromise, and the deft application of expectation strategies. The U.S. appears to much of the world to be anti-intellectual.

On the other hand, expectation strategies become highly so-

phisticated among master craftsmen. Attempts to transcribe what is going on in an expectational confrontation become pedantically complex. Such competitive tactics are nonverbal and nonconscious, for the most part. When the strategies function effectively between two skilled opponents, the contest becomes a work of art. The thrusts and parries, attacks and defenses, moves and countermoves operate intuitively and quickly. Players appear to psych out each other's expectations at a subtle, unobservable, unconscious level. Each attempts to draw the other into traps of anticipated actions—a feigned or actual expectation is countered by a feigned or actual expectation. Each player attempts to confuse the other as to whether the next action will be feigned or actual. Intellectually skilled opponents can turn a physical contest into an intense intellectual, aesthetic experience.

A Fifth Dan black-belt karateka described martial arts competition as the sensitive unconscious perceptions of one opponent matched against the unconscious perceptions of another. At this level, the game is far too complex, rapid, and subtle to be consciously deliberated. Humans continuously exchange information of which they are consciously unaware, and that information powerfully affects behavior. Every data exchange narrows the number of possible next moves. Motives and strategies to achieve objectives reduce quickly from the general to the specific. The underlying rules of the game are never explicitly stated, but they could not be more binding and significant if expressed in an exhaustively worded contract.

### Expectational Stress

Expectations influence our susceptibility to illness and disease. Virtually all illness is affected by a patient's perception of his life situation. Susceptibility increases greatly as one descends socio-economic levels—especially for those with limited access to medicine. Illness frequently relates to congested living conditions, poor sanitation and nutrition, more stressful employment, lower expectations of success, and increased utilization of commercial mass media. Illness is not randomly distributed throughout the population. Those most susceptible appear to view their lives as difficult,

demanding, and unsatisfactory. Recent changes—death in the family, divorce, employment termination, retirement, et cetera—also sharply increase susceptibility to illness. The sense of having options, and being free to choose among them, significantly reduces stress.

No disease, of course, is caused exclusively by problems of social adjustment. An individual's expectations—adaptation or adjustment—are a major factor, however, in the development of many illnesses, including heart disease, kidney problems, high blood pressure, eclampsia, rheumatic and rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory diseases of skin and eyes, infections, allergic and hypersensitivity diseases, cancer, and metabolic malfunctions.

Stress, of course, is a product of expectations—what we think of ourselves and what we perceive others think of us. These expectations usually determine whether we endure stress or walk away from it. Numerous stress studies have found biochemical changes—such as endocrine responses—related to stressful demands. In response to stress, the body usually passes through three stages:

1. Initial alarm reactions—antibody levels fall below normal.
2. Body resources mobilize to resist.
3. If stress is not reduced, eventual exhaustion occurs and antibody levels drop below normal.

Perceptions of stress vary widely from one individual to another. Stress itself cannot hurt you. Damage results from your perception of being in a stressful situation; the expectation of being unable to cope increases disease susceptibility. Subliminal influences can initiate or manipulate perceptions of both expectations and stress.

The effect of expectations upon health is demonstrated in experiments with placebos. The placebo is an inert, nonmedicinal substance believed by the patient to be actual medicine. *Placebo* means "to please." Until roughly 100 years ago, nearly all medications and therapies were placeboic. They worked, some of the time. Placebo effects involve patient expectations—faith, hope, and anticipation of relief. Many modern pharmaceuticals are merely placebos whose ad hype increases expectations of effectiveness.

In numerous studies, placebos worked 25% to 40% of the time for postoperative pain relief. Placebos, or expectations, alone produce measurable physiological changes. Actual medicinal drug effectiveness is also increased or decreased by patient expectations, and by a medical staff's degree of enthusiasm and optimism.

Expectations have also been related to the occurrence and timing of death. Most elderly people view retirement homes as the end of the line. Mortality, for both men and women, doubles after admission. Psychological withdrawal in Nazi concentration camps was known to have been fatal. Giving up involves a perception of impotence, inability to cope, a diminished will to live—often a self-imposed sentence of death.

Studies of voodoo deaths also demonstrate fatal psychogenic effects from the expectation of death by curse. Cursed subjects often saw their destiny as beyond their control—a loss of volition. Predicted deaths not infrequently came to pass. Negative expectations are also fundamental aspects of suicidal behaviors.

Expectations of success are extremely important. On unfamiliar tasks, self-perception of probable success usually derives from a comparison of self with others. Self-perceptions evoke self-fulfilling prophecies. High expectation of probable success enhances performance; low expectation—or worse, helplessness—produces motivational disaster. Low perceptions of success probably can ensure failure, destroying an individual's will to respond with enough effort and vigor for achievement.

In studies of sexual dysfunction, Masters and Johnson discovered that orgasmic success was frequently based upon self-expectations and perceptions of the expectations of sexual partners. The ability of mothers to breast-feed their infants is strongly influenced by the expectations of self and others. If mothers believe they will successfully nurse infants, they probably will. Should individuals believe others believe they will fail, the belief itself contributes to failure.

When people enter undefined situations or seek unfamiliar goals, they first maneuver to learn how others in the system relate to one another and their respective goals. Status hierarchies, the so-called pecking orders, are extremely important as newcomers assume their entry position. Meta-communication, composite signaling about the

meaning of other acts of communication (see Bateson, "A Theory of Play") occurs both as a consciously and an unconsciously premeditated effort. Newcomers want to ensure inappropriate evaluations of goal-directed roles do not occur accidentally, through subtle language slips or from inept tactics. Name-, place-, and experience-dropping are used to legitimize both role and information credibility. In effect, they say indirectly, "Believe what I say because of who I am." Humans in virtually all known cultural systems perform similarly in relation to expectations of self and others.

The game appears universal throughout the world. Strategies are both verbal and nonverbal. Denying that such strategies exist is in itself a strategy. Expectations are communicated by subtle postures, vocal tonalities and inflections, minute changes in facial muscles, eye contact or avoidance, costume selection, and, in stressful situations, olfactory stimuli. What appears to transpire at conscious levels may be completely contradicted at unconscious levels, or both levels may reinforce each other.

Individuals carry in their heads stereotypical descriptions of groups that include Russians, Chinese, Japanese, Latins, Arabs, Jews, Christians, Moslems, Buddhists, Catholics, Republicans, Democrats, communists, socialists, anarchists, cowboys; the list is endless. The descriptions are fictional, false, factually meaningless nonsense in terms of the complex realities described by the labels. Much of formal education is directed at discrediting stereotypes. They nevertheless persist. Stereotypes are more intensely manufactured in some cultures than in others.

Cultures train and discipline members to expect that certain characteristics cluster in both individuals and groups. Expectations of others usually include broad categories used to describe the abilities, attitudes, interests, physical features, personality traits, and behaviors consciously perceived—or anticipated—in others. These are beliefs about which characteristics in expectations of personality fit together and which do not. For example, in a news story, an ad, or a soap opera, the moment a character is introduced a hierarchy of stereotypical expectations surface in the audience. One piece of data about an individual or group calls up additional characteristics from the audience's cultural storehouse of stereotypical expectations. Conscious and unconscious

perceptions project expectations of behavior and the characteristics that produce such behavior.

### The Sincerity Fantasy

A primary cultural expectation communicated by ad media is *sincerity*. Models, newscasters, heroes, and even villains collectively establish a national sincerity stereotype. Media-manufactured sincerity illustrates that words and images conceal, as well as inform. Sincerity is verbalized as the ultimate achievement in personality development. Leaders do not actually have to be sincere, but they must appear sincere. To appear consistently sincere requires insincerity of the highest magnitude. Untrained, undisciplined, average individuals could not pull it off.

Sincere people, neckties, clothing, endless artifacts, and carefully engineered social situations reinforce our sincerity expectations. Stereotypical expectations of sincerity set up a perceptual ideal for interpersonal relationships. The population is constantly admonished, verbally and nonverbally, to be sincere. This is such a cultural preoccupation that it suggests deeply ingrained fear of insincerity. Anyone suspected of insincerity is avoided. If reality-oriented perception enters into the evaluation, however, excessively sincere persons would be approached with extreme caution.

Sincerity is generally viewed as an honest, friendly, straightforward, disarming, and transparent posture or image. Perceptual sincerity helps us feel that everything is what it appears to be. Nothing is concealed or camouflaged. Consistency is a unique requirement of sincerity. Inconsistent people must be untrustworthy, even if they otherwise seem sincere. Yet one of the few valid generalizations one can make about humans is about their inconsistency. We constantly change in response to conditioning, events, new information, values, physiological processes, et cetera. Beware of anyone who tries to project consistency as an aspect of sincerity!

Sincerity cannot become a significant social value without an impetus provided by insincerity. The truth inherently conceals the lie. Inverse values may be perceived only unconsciously but are always there—hiding, awaiting an opportunity to surface. For sales-

ther. Positive expectations move individuals to ignore negative facts, impressions, or risks.

No matter how they are played, human expectations are fictional constructs which can lead to disaster if not constantly probed. Many personnel directors discipline themselves to disregard appearances, while realizing that this is never entirely possible.

To increase the likelihood their expectations will be fulfilled, people communicate expectations with glances, avoidance or establishment of eye contact, name-calling and name-dropping, co-operation, competition, and facial or body movements as small as one-fifth of a millimeter. Verbal and nonverbal behaviors let others know how they are perceived in relation to ourselves. The subtle communication of expectations is documented in experiments dating back at least to 1904. Clever Hans was a world-famous German "talking horse." He appeared to converse by tapping out answers to questions with a forehoof—one tap for *A*, two for *B*, etc. He had, so it appeared, learned the alphabet. A panel of thirteen scientists and experts—members of the Prussian Science Academy and University of Berlin—reported that their studies had ruled out deception and unintentional communication by the owner. They awarded Clever Hans honors and proclaimed the animal a respectable and important scientific discovery.

Several months later the only skeptic on the committee discovered that Clever Hans could not perform without observing his questioners. The horse read—as most horses can—signals humans constantly transmit, over which they usually have no control and of which they are consciously unaware. (This is one of the reasons horses are so loved by their owners.)

Clever Hans's sensitivity to the experts' expectations had produced the remarkable feats of intelligence. The horse stopped tapping his hoof when he sensed it was expected. The experts were completely unaware that they were sending subtle messages of expectation. The Clever Hans phenomenon has been experimentally demonstrated with horses, pigs, dogs, and other animals. Were humans as perceptually sensitive as animals, they might avoid the many disasters to which they blindly submit themselves.

Stigmatized individuals, however, are more apt to be aware of the expectations of others, sometimes only unconsciously. There

are three broad stigma areas: ethnic or religious affiliations; character or behavior deviations; and physical impairments.

People often find themselves uncomfortable around stigmatized individuals, and attempt to cover it with patronizing kindness. Patronizing behavior is usually apparent to the stigmatized, but any overt response to the perceived hypocrisy would be interpreted as ungrateful. They end up feeling frustrated and saddled with a fraudulent relationship. Virtually any black, Latin, Arab, Asian, or disabled person living in the U.S. can discuss this dilemma in considerable detail.

The stigmatized often develop self-expectations that conform to the expectations of others. They are aware they are disliked or considered inferior. The stereotypical expectations can evoke behavior that reflects the stereotype, which usually provokes and reinforces further rejection and discrimination, or insincere treatment. The mechanism is perpetual, largely unconscious, and deadly in its potential for destructiveness.

It is impossible to hide expectations from others. Humans perceived by others cannot avoid communicating at many levels. Moreover, everyone is in constant jeopardy of expressing miscues and unintended information. It is never what was said that counts, but what was perceived to have been said. Humans can never opt out of the game unless they are content to live alone on a desert island. It is wiser to attempt to understand the strategies and increase the chance of success. The game cannot be stopped, but it can be won through a knowledge of what is going on.

There are several limitations, however, to how well one can consciously manage complex interpersonal communication. Role-playing to accommodate a certain objective is usually detectable. Though they may initially repress an awareness of fraud, audiences are likely to respond negatively sooner or later. Several national TV commercials were tested with individuals unsighted since birth. Visual perception dominates and suppresses the sensitivity of other senses. The unsighted individuals invariably described the actors as "insincere," "untrustworthy," "feigned," "hypocritical," "false," "dishonest," and "devious." After viewing and hearing the same commercials, sighted people described the actors in positive, complimentary terms.

Both sighted and unsighted heard the same voices. At an unconscious level, the sighted must have perceived what the unsighted consciously perceived. But the sighted repressed conscious awareness of being manipulated and allowed the dominance of pleasing, interesting, visual projection and identification cues. Awareness of deception often surfaces later over issues of trust, honesty, integrity, and confidence.

University classes in such areas as advertising, public relations, marketing, and business are far worse than merely worthless. They offer the student little more than one-dimensional human manipulation as a conscious technology directed at goal (profit) attainment. Such education produces people who cannot communicate effectively. Without respect for integrity, dignity, compassion, love, feelings, frailties, weaknesses, and even folly, effective and meaningful communication must always be questionable. One can bribe, cajole, coerce, argue, manipulate, con, and persuade up to a point, but there always exists the threat of discovery and backlash. Truly effective communication skills are the product of honesty, life experience, and broad, genuine humanistic concerns, not simply a desire for money and power.

### The Competition for Oblivion

In a number of studies, individuals with strong competitive tendencies were compared with those who appeared strongly cooperative. It is often blindly assumed that competition is the most desirable pursuit available to humans. The two general personalities had very different views of each other. Cooperators were consciously aware that some individuals were strongly competitive and others strongly cooperative. Competitors, however, appeared unaware of the difference. Competitors compel most people with whom they relate to compete. Further, those who bear mindless allegiance to the ideals of unrestrained competition cannot acknowledge the social and human effects of their obsession.

A person's self-expectations—distinct from the expectations of others—involve perceptions of strength, weakness, and ability, or what is popularly called *self-image*. Self-image has much to do with success. Successful decision-making in a goal-structured situation

depends on self-expectations of success. If someone believes he or she will succeed, or that there is a good probability of success, the likelihood is greatly enhanced.

That probability is evaluated by comparisons with others. Most people believe they are a little better than average. Perceptions of "average" are usually derived from peers, friends, neighbors, and relatives—persons with whom one has regular personal relationships. For most, such sources of self-image are probably healthy, and based within perceived realities of day-to-day life experience.

When ad media enter the picture, however, the self-esteem derived from peer associations deteriorates rapidly. Ads are designed to evoke a sense of audience inferiority through comparisons with media personalities—the beautiful people. Even the unbeautiful, the losers, in media often appear winners to the audience by comparison with themselves. Fictional media personalities seem educated, surrounded by interesting, pretty, talented, often wealthy and powerful people, easily able to enjoy the world's indulgences and riches. These superior lives become the audience's fantasized goal, both consciously and unconsciously. The mechanism was designed to encourage the purchase of ad-hyped products—the essential *raison d'être* of commercial media. The implied promise of ad-generated consumption is equality, acceptance, and participation in the good life of the beautiful media people—an unfulfillable promise and expectation.

Reality, as it is perceived by most people, is quiet desperation—often a grim, quiet struggle for survival against illness, boredom, loneliness, anxiety, despair, and countless real and imagined threats to security and well-being. Media celebrities and the roles in which they are cast rarely appear besieged by such problems. Media fantasies provide audiences with a projective escape, through identification. Ad-massaged audiences are taught to view the world as a place where everybody else seems to be getting it all—everyone, that is, except themselves. Consumption becomes the mechanism of liberation, freedom, the pathway to the good life, the new religion.

Individuals who are deeply integrated into media identifications often abandon their own goals without making any effort to achieve them. Their media-derived pessimism is severely damaging. Some may argue that media characters have always been

perceived by audiences as special cases, at least since early Greek drama. Perhaps true, but traditional literary or dramatic characterizations were perceived to embody the broadest range of behaviors, from villainy through heroism, instead of the simplistic stereotypes that now dominate. Today, ad media is our environment, omnipresent, an active part of every hour. Were Karl Marx writing today, it is doubtful he could make a serious case against religion. Ad media long ago replaced religion as the opiate of high-technology societies.

By the age of eighteen, the average North American has seen over 18,000 hours of television, far more than the hours spent in educational pursuits. These passive participants unconsciously absorb an exhaustive brainwashing in what eventually evolves as their cultural system. Only 15% of the U.S. TV audience watches documentaries or other thoughtful programming. Television is dismissed as educationally insignificant, as merely entertainment. The long-term cumulative effects are disregarded.

The media condition audiences for a wide range of maladaptive behaviors. Clinical psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors are inundated by patients who have come to perceive themselves as losers, who have lost or not developed vital self-esteem, confidence, and individual identities. The young emulate rich rock stars, athletes, actors—anyone who appears to have achieved fame and fortune with little effort, sacrifice, or dedication. “Have fun, get rich, and get laid as often as possible” has become the twentieth-century ad-media philosophy. Ads sell! They manipulate! They also grind up humans into pathetic fantasy-obsessed victims.

### Stereotypical Personality Myths

The concept of personality—as defined by individuals, so-called scientific facts, testing, and by groups and cultures—is a monstrous fiction. Personality descriptions are constructed to accommodate conscious and unconscious objectives. Every individual has beliefs (generalizations) about what people are like. Personality descriptions group those human characteristics perceived as *fitting together* and *fitting in* as opposed to those that do not.

Humans apparently possess the innate predisposition to evaluate and judge others based on general impressions of *goodness* or *badness*. Such perceptions are often describable as symbolic archetypes and stereotypes. The assessment of personality stems from generalizations. Personality, however it may be explained at any time or place, lies strictly in the eyes of the beholders and depends on the values currently accepted or rejected by their cultural systems.

Individuals hold personality theories similar to those held by others in their group or culture. When visible styles of dress, manner, and appearance conform to what is considered “average” or “normal” (perceptual fictions) at a particular time and place, these fantasized norms become a basis for personality assessment. Characteristics that serve as evaluation cues include clothes, car, musical taste, walk, education, income, voice quality, posture, color preferences—anything, in effect, subjects do or don’t do. But which of the many possibilities in each category is judged “good”? There appear to be no universal standards of *beauty* or *goodness*. They have been everything conceivable at various times and places. Concepts of *beauty* and *goodness* must, in fact, be sold or communicated to achieve widespread acceptance—the important cultural role of ad media.

People often dislike or find themselves hostile to someone after brief, summary exposure. Hostility appears for reasons never specified, unconscious reactions to seemingly casual communication. No individual can be perceived completely without prejudice. When perceptions bias *against*, the individual is avoided. His or her companionship is tacitly assumed unrewarding. Avoidance reinforces dislike, so there is less opportunity to discover positive features. On the other hand, when someone is *liked*, it is rewarding to be around them. More time is spent in evaluation, eventually discovering negative features. Negative aspects are often offset by an initial positive reaction. Or, negative realizations may provoke eventual disillusionment, rejection, and enmity.

Personality assessment is one of the weakest, shakiest notions in a world of many weak, shaky notions. Personality characteristics can be packaged to appear reasonable, natural, even scientific. Anything, however, taken for granted as reasonable, natural, and scientific should—in the interest of survival and adjustment—

trigger bright warning lights. Beware! Most significant new ideas—throughout the history of science, scholarship, art, and intellectual innovation—developed in resistance to ideas or assumptions taken for granted. Often an insight, discovery, theory, or treasured assumption fits so well with what common sense and everyday perceptual experience confirm, it is difficult to believe anyone could ever have thought otherwise. These are often the most dangerous of assumptions.

Public-relations and publicity images are the worst of stereotypical fictions. They are harmful if directed inward as part of self-perception. They are self-exploitive when projected outward as fictional images of leaders, celebrities, friends, or enemies. The population has, over the years, been carefully indoctrinated to accept images (stereotypes) as substitutions for reality-oriented perceptions. Realities occasionally seep through the barriers constructed by perceptual manipulators to preserve their client's fictions. Fantasy images of omnipotence, however, are popularly preferred over complex, often contradictory, human qualities.

Former President Lyndon Johnson used to joke privately that it would be a healthy, sobering experience for the public to view their president at least once annually seated upon a toilet. He explained that the publicity might restrain presidents from being carried away by their PR images, and the public might mature if periodically reminded that its leader, with the nuclear attack codebooks, was only human. In the media-dominated U.S., however, such deflation of media puffery in favor of reality appears unlikely.

All humans are influenced by perceptual biases. They preferentially ignore factual data, exclude from definitions, and interpret from subjective perspectives. The more "objective" they fancy themselves, the more extensive and concealed are their biases. No human is more biased than one who perceives himself unbiased. Without awareness of perceptual limitations—and the biases thereby incurred—humans mistake inference for fact, theory for truth, fantasies for realities, and rely on judgments warped by conscious and unconscious influences. This seems to be an innate aspect of the human condition. It would be preferable to admit fallibility and make the best of it, instead of stumbling on with fraudulent, dangerous, illusions of "objective reality." Our *truths* may yet destroy us!

## Moralities Require Deviants

Any behavior perceived as normal will be perceived as abnormal in another context or group standard. Behaviors become deviant more through their perception than through the actual behaviors themselves. When acts are perceived as negative deviations from a group's usual expectations, perpetrators will be punished in some way. High-tech cultures, such as the U.S., the U.S.S.R., and Japan, appear more sensitive to deviation than others, and hence more punitive. Middle-income groups are generally more intolerant of deviation than high- and low-income populations. The poor have nothing to lose and the rich are protected against losing.

In addition, the religiously devout are more intolerant than the religiously indifferent. Religious beliefs are major social instruments for defining deviant behavior. Perceived deviation initiates reaction that isolates, treats, corrects, or punishes deviants. The actual behavior itself may be of little consequence. Notions of perceived normality and deviations from it permeate all known cultures and subcultures.

Many groups demonstrate double standards when they deal with outsiders. Newcomers will be expected to conform rigidly to group expectations, while older group members usually have more freedom. Expected behavior norms rarely apply uniformly to all members of any group. Many groups or cultures actually create deviance by making rules that certain individuals will be compelled to violate. Deviations may have been the original source of group cohesion. Such rule structures provide a group with perceived exclusivity, uniqueness, and validity. Deviation rules often have powerful economic sponsorship that reinforces the status quo.

Rule-making usually involves a cast of fictional, perceptually constructed characters that include rule-makers, enforcers, and of course the very necessary deviants. It makes no sense to create and enforce rules that no one violates. Many groups could not survive without deviants. If deviants do not exist, they must be created. One method of creating deviants is through projective stereotyping.

Rule structures may be formal or informal, conscious or unconscious. Deviation rules almost always include moral characteristics—vital ingredients in group cohesion. In a world where no

one violated moral expectations, such expectations would vanish. Perceived morality depends entirely upon perceived immorality. Deviance provides a major mechanism by which humans can invent or construct their friends and enemies, gods and devils, loyalties and disloyalties, loves and hates. Morality, utilized to define deviance, is a perceptual product, the engineering of which is a major media industry in the high-tech nations of the world.

This brings into the game a perception, based on a perception, based on a perception, ad infinitum—all locked together, an Ouroboros. The snake again bites its tail. Deviance perceptions operate without conscious awareness by the players involved.

For the game to be played effectively, however, leaders must have some awareness of the dynamics. Without conscious awareness, it is difficult to manage the deviance mechanism over an extended time. The system can, nevertheless, be operated intuitively, with the risk of abruptly losing control. The system operates only as long as the manipulation remains repressed by group members. The skillful management of deviance threats can be observed in the rhetoric of big-money TV evangelists. Their media money-milking machines entrance their victims, who rarely consciously discover their victimization.

A majority group that ignores deviance is eventually likely to disappear in its present form. It will be absorbed or synthesized into another, more militant group. But if the group enforces rules too rigidly, the opposition is enhanced. Democratic political theories of government are based on the careful management of deviance. It is surprising that so many people in democratic societies remain unaware of the significance of deviance. In the U.S.S.R., Gorbachev's *perestroika* (restructuring) demonstrates an attempt to politically manage deviance after seventy years of suppression and restraint. *Perestroika*, assuming it continues and survives the turmoil, is one of the most important political events in Soviet history.

Deviance is difficult to comprehend when one is trapped in the Aristotelian logic of objective reality. Gorbachev has already discovered that a substantial portion of his population is strongly opposed to *perestroika*. Numerous politicians in both the U.S. and the Soviet Union have made profitable, lifelong careers of communist/capitalist bashing. The mass-communication media are also principal beneficiaries of deviant-bashing.

In the U.S., certain categories of people are expected to be deviant—musicians, actors, homosexuals, communists, socialists, atheists, intellectuals, juvenile delinquents, welfare recipients, ethnic minorities, and criminals—not necessarily in that order. At the top of the list are the alleged mentally ill. Mental illness is usually implied in deviance.

Victims almost never consciously discover the games played with their deviance. The conscious, or for the most part unconscious, rules for deviance are rooted deeply in the history and traditions of groups. These rules are taken for granted by group members and often attributed to the word of God or science—the highest high-credibility information sources available. These traditions have become so much a part of perceived reality, especially in high-tech societies, that violations appear bizarre or perverse. Many of the rules exist in residual attitudes, nonverbal and undefined.

"This book and its author will be perceived by many as deviant, to some even dangerously deviant—threatening to life, truth, and reason as they are popularly perceived. During broadcast interviews and lecture appearances, this author has been frequently attacked for being insane, subversive, ungrateful, radical, controversial, threatening, and—the ultimate deviance in the U.S.—for being a communist. A major social institution, the ad-media culture machine, seemed to be threatened. Media provide legitimization and cultural verification for much of society."

A particularly vitriolic attack against this author's books appeared in *Advertising Age* (Sept. 17, 1984), the ad industry house organ. Written by a professor of advertising, the 3,500-word cover story ignored the more than five hundred published research studies confirming the effects upon behavior of subliminal stimuli, the many examples illustrated in the books, and authoritative testimony on the subject by respected scientists, scholars, and government administrators. The critique denied the existence of subliminal perception, attacked this author's sanity and credibility, and denounced this "profitable exploitation" of the defenseless ad industry.

The attack was an attempt to generate public pressure on perceptual deviance. The writer and publisher of the story were presumably aware that one month before the *Advertising Age* story was published, the U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol,

Tobacco, and Firearms had issued new regulations prohibiting subliminal stimuli in alcoholic beverage ads (see Appendix). Perceptual deviance has caused, and continues to cause, considerable discomfort and expense to the ad industry.

### Deviance Manipulation

Several variables appear to control whether rule-breaking will be denied or ignored by a group. Most groups agree that punishment should fit the crime. The rule-breaker's power, status, and wealth are also important variables. The higher the status of the rule-breakers, the more likely the group will permit them to get away with transgressions. Just consider how Richard Nixon or various television evangelists survived enormous scandals.

The amount of tolerance for deviance usually relates to the amount of outside pressure a group feels. To decrease tolerance, leaders often increase group perceptions of outside threats. This mechanism can be observed in government justifications of military expenditures and foreign interventions. Threats from the U.S.S.R. and others appear to fluctuate depending upon whether Congress or public opinion opposes policies or appropriations.

Moral majorities, as many have noted in recent years, usually turn out to be neither. Perceived social ideals invariably have an underside, the inverse, the reality concealed by the ideal. Law and order advocates often end up convicted criminals. Those politicians who most decry wasteful spending have squandered the public purse at rates vastly exceeding the wastefulness of history's most indulged profligates. The most sincere so frequently turn out completely insincere. Godly pretensions often conceal avarice, criminality, and ruthlessness. Stereotypical labels usually say far more about the labeler than they do about the labeled. Individuals who cannot think around and beyond stereotypical expectations are doomed to ritually repeat the tragedies of the past as they follow their leaders into oblivion.

## 9 | SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES

“Why and by what right does one nation or one class of people lock up, torture, exile, flog, kill, and destroy other people, when they themselves are no better (or worse) than those whom they torture?”

Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*

Our deepest fears reside just behind the everyday and the bland.

John Berger, *The Sense of Sight*

“The chief source of disorder in society is the hypocrisy of those who pretend to be virtuous, on the one hand, while all the time behaving contrary to their professed beliefs.”

Plato, *The Republic*

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung recorded the story of a patient who shortly before a vacation dreamed of falling from a mountain to his death. A week later, the patient actually fell to his death from the mountain in the dream. Coincidence? Most unlikely. Self-fulfilling prophecies (SFPs) are assumptions or predictions that seem to cause an event to occur, thus confirming their own accuracy. The process of fulfilling the prediction can be conscious, unconscious, or both.

If people assume they are not liked, the assumption alone often prompts them to act hostile, defensive, suspicious, and aggressive. These behaviors, in turn, provoke similar reactions from others. Thus, initial assumptions are confirmed. Individuals end up being disliked. People rarely realize the power they possess to victimize themselves through assumptions, convictions, and predictions.

Life, for better or worse, is rarely as simple as it is made to appear. Good causes often have bad effects, and vice versa. The complex contradictions of verbal realities ensure that nothing is what it appears to be on the surface, especially for those with mindless faith in simplistic definitions. Advertisers incorporate the underside of cause-and-effect assumptions into ads at subliminal levels in ways that would frighten consumers if they suspected what was going on. U.S. ad technique has been exported throughout the world. The *Paris Match* ad (fig. 25) appears as a simple cause-and-effect proposition. Brightly colored Eminence shorts will improve your sexual success. The copy translates as, "Dress yourself every morning with colors that sing." The models were photographed, the rest of the page painted. The attractive young man is dominant in the illustration. The man's expression appears macho, self-satisfied, even arrogant as he stares off into space with a beguiling though vacuous smile. He is physically attractive but seemingly carried away with his beauty and self-assurance. A reader might speculate that he spent half an hour combing his hair before the photograph. The surface message is that the colored shorts will make you even more irresistible to women. He appears a man wildly infatuated with himself. His left hand condescendingly rests on the girl's shoulder. Anyone who gullibly believes in the promise of Eminence has set themself up with an SFP for failure in complex, sensitive human relationships.

The young woman model, however, appears much more inter-

esting. She is on her knees, her body hidden beneath the windowsill. The pose establishes a relationship between her head and the man's pelvic area. He is clearly dominant, she submissive. Now, the underside! The blond model is asking the reader not to tell, to keep her secret, her index finger seals her lips, *ssssssh!* What is her secret?

On the reverse side of the page appears a conventional black-and-white ad for electrical appliances—nine of them: a toaster, mixer, warmer, opener, et cetera. This is not very exciting stuff in the colorful world of sexualized ads (fig. 26). With nine items, the ad is cluttered. The sales logic is questionable. Readers are unlikely to waste their time on so familiar a group of products.

*Paris Match* is printed on thin paper. As the pages are turned, light penetrates from one side to the other. Figure 59 shows the Eminence ad held up to light so the appliance ad bleeds through. We can now understand the young woman's secret—the electric carving knife, hovering above the male's genital area. Both of the see-through ads, directed primarily at males, become highly emotionalized by the subliminal embed. Castration fears are a common denominator that unite male consumers. A verbal logic could be constructed to justify the symbolism, but it would end up as a simplistic cause-and-effect rationale. It is probably wiser to simply acknowledge that the symbolic nonverbal mechanisms work often enough to justify widespread use, such as in the scissors hidden within the *Playboy* logo (see Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, pp. 123–25).

From a statistical analysis, there were two chances in the 120 total pages in *Paris Match* that the two ads could have randomly ended up back to back, one chance in nine the knife could appear in the position over the male genital area. It is extremely improbable that the placements could have been a random accident, even less probable when knowledge of subliminal embeds was known to the artists and ad agency involved.

SFPs are well known in the sciences. Science philosopher Paul Feyerabend concluded, "Not conservative but anticipatory suppositions (what we wish to happen) guide scientific research." SFPs are much discussed in psychiatry and psychology but are rarely considered a normal aspect of the daily lives of individuals, groups, and even nations.

Many SFPs are attributable to assumptions derived from ad media. The SFP usually derives from strongly believed cause-and-effect assumptions. In these, the relationship between cause and effect becomes circular and self-reinforcing, rather than linear and open-ended—the Ouroboros again. The SFP is an unconscious mechanism whereby humans unwittingly set themselves up for an outcome that their assumptions actually made possible. These outcomes may be either good or bad for the individual involved, sometimes both. If good, they seem to be the product of a wise decision, lucky guess, or profound insight into the mechanisms of causation. SFPs seemingly involve simple, direct decision-making in which you evaluate the future effects of an act, seeking the most advantageous outcome.

The process appears natural, respectable, logical, and defensible. Cause-and-effect conclusions are rarely questioned. All such decisions consider the future, and eventually prove to have been either correct or incorrect or both for a variety of perceptually constructed rationalizations. The SFP may, at first, have been neither true nor false but *produces* a truth or falsity by its existence as part of the reasoning process.

Curious SFPs occur in people's relationships with the Internal Revenue Service. The income tax laws are infamously contradictory and arbitrary, wide open to interpretation. To comprehend the myriad collection of constantly changing laws requires a full-time staff of skilled professionals. Even superficial understanding is a major effort for CPAs. IRS agents assume that taxpayers cheat and seek to avoid truthful income declarations. Anyone who has endured an IRS audit knows how this preconception influences the investigation. IRS agents probe lifestyles, property, and amusements to estimate income. Contrary to legal doctrine in criminal or civil actions, taxpayers are compelled to prove themselves innocent in the face of an IRS assumption of guilt.

That assumption, or prediction, compels the taxpayer to avoid simple, truthful income declarations. Dishonesty, or perhaps borderline honesty, becomes imperative to escape perceived unfair taxation. The IRS's assumptions actually create the situation predicted. It is irrelevant whether initial assumptions were true or false. What was presumed to be the *effect* turns out to be the *cause*.

The cause produces the dilemma. The prophecy of the situation *causes* the situation of the prophecy.

Most corporate personnel officers can recall situations where employees got the notion they were about to be fired—reacting to insecurity over normal business cycles or to guilt over some real or imagined personal deficiency. By behaving erratically or allowing their work to suffer, they progressively set themselves up for firing, which, indeed became reality.

Michel Foucault's brilliant history of insanity, *Madness and Civilization*, documents an astonishing variety of contradictory definitions for insanity. It demonstrates that insanity is a socially manufactured concept, changing as societies over the centuries sought new ways to deal with deviants. Sanity, on the other hand, was rarely defined. Indeed, sanity may be undefinable. Sanity is tacitly assumed to be those practices, policies, and behaviors commonly accepted by a particular society at a particular time as normal. Normalcy is a fine concept until you recall it was once considered normal to burn witches, heretics, and other deviants at the stake after brutal torture. It is currently considered normal to live minutes away from nuclear devastation. When viewed on an ever-changing historical continuum, much of what is today considered sane or normal would be insane or abnormal at another time and place.

Civilizations have manufactured and enforced countless definitions of insanity and continue to elaborate the idea at an increasing tempo. One modern psychiatric criterion for sanity is the extent of a person's reality adaptation, usually defined as "fitting in," or ability to discriminate between fantasy and reality. Common sense, enforced by judicial statutes, assumes that sanity is an objective reality: real, open to examination, measurement, and comprehension. The psychiatric community argues endlessly over verbal definitions within the general framework of insanity. The framework itself is rarely challenged. It should be! Like personality definitions, insanity labels unjustly evoke self-fulfilling prophecies.

Psychiatric diagnoses, unlike diagnoses in other medical specialties, define, and in so doing create, pathological conditions. The diagnosis or definition becomes part of the illness and creates a series of self-fulfilling prophecies. Once an institutionalized di-

agnosis is made, a reality is invented in which even normal behavior appears disturbed. After the diagnosis, perceptions that reinforce the diagnosis are manufactured. The process quickly moves beyond the control of patients, diagnosing physicians, family, staff, and hospital administrations. All participate in the construction of a reality that supports the diagnosis. A reporter was checked into a mental hospital to gather material for an article. The staff who saw him writing in a notebook portentously observed on his chart that he "engaged in note-taking behavior."

The process also occurs regularly in day-to-day human relationships where, for whatever purpose, individuals are labeled, categorized, and stereotyped. Hospitals overflow with the poor, aged, and abandoned, often from minority groups, who were admitted merely because they embarrassed, disturbed, shocked, or annoyed someone or some group. Stereotypical diagnostic labels confirm and legitimize the wisdom of society.

*Schizophrenia*, one of the most frequent mental health diagnoses, supposedly describes a psychosis that includes an inability to discriminate between fantasy and reality. It should be clear from the illustrations in this book that many supposedly normal people cannot discriminate between fantasy and reality. They cannot even differentiate between real and fantasy ice cubes. Clinical diagnoses frequently result in self-fulfilling prophecies with two basic ingredients. Patients experience great discomfort and they accept the diagnosis as the explanation for that discomfort. The clinical diagnosis is a high-credibility verification and authorization for the symptoms and treatment for the symptoms.

The labeled patient becomes entrapped in a labyrinth of clinical expectations, interactions, and maladjustment patterns. These further isolate the patient and evoke further fantasy orientations. These fantasies, of course, further confirm the diagnosis, which evokes further fantasy orientations, which further confirm, ad infinitum. The snake again bites its tail, another Ouroboros.

In December 1985, a schizophrenia study by the Yale Medical School found that over two-thirds of patients diagnosed schizophrenic completely recovered and, thereafter, led normal, productive lives. Yet the *Diagnostic Criteria, DSM III*, of the American Psychiatric Association—the basic reference of definitions on which commitments to mental institutions are based—defines

schizophrenia as a permanent disability from which it is virtually impossible to recover. Indeed, the *DSM III*'s long, interconnecting, all-encompassing definition of schizophrenia would lock in anyone so designated for a lifetime career as a mental patient. The Social Security Administration accepts the *DSM III* as a basis for disability determinations.

*Paranoia*, another popular diagnosis, means social conduct perceived as suspicious, aggressive, hostile, stubborn, jealous, and covetous—adjectives that describe most successful businesspeople. Once the process of social exclusion and regimentation begins, the patient defined as paranoid has a reason for this behavior. Simply being sane in an unsane world reasonably evokes the above paranoid symptoms.

Labeled patients become more and more detached from families and social groups. Strained relationships evoke further stereotypical definitions such as *crank*, *crackpot*, *crazy*, *hopeless*, and finally the ultimate branding, *insane*. The door closes, often permanently. "Common sense" entraps everyone. Whether we are active or passive players in the farce, or audience, this entrapment has the potential to justify the ultimate disaster.

SFPs are well illustrated in Ken Kesey's celebrated novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, as well as in actual studies. In a study by psychologist David Rosenhan, eight volunteer pseudo-patients were admitted to twelve mental hospitals in five states across the country. Each patient falsely reported hearing "voices" to achieve admission. The pseudo-patients were diagnosed, with one manic-depressive exception, as schizophrenics. They were instructed to act normally after admission and get out of the hospital by convincing the staff they were sane. Confinements ranged from seven to fifty-two days, averaging nineteen. When finally discharged, each was designated not as cured, but as schizophrenic and manic-depressive "in remission."

The so-called mental illnesses were just perceptual constructions manufactured by the institutional staffs, whose vested interest was in finding clients to treat. Staff members appeared to believe that anything once named or labeled must exist in reality. They compelled reality, the patient, to conform with their perceptual expectations. In effect, they perceived the world as definitions (words) permitted, conforming perceptions of reality to the definitions

rather than fitting definitions to their day-to-day observations of each patient.

The pseudo-patients quickly discovered that there were carefully defined labels for pathological, abnormal behaviors. Normal behaviors, on the other hand, were difficult—if not impossible—to define once diagnostic labels became securely attached to patients. Even if a patient was perceived ready for discharge, they were not considered sane or well, but “in remission.” Compliance with the construct was then enforced upon patients. Curiously, a common experience was recognition as *normal* by other patients.<sup>1</sup>

### Who Is Really Inside, and Outside?

This experience, where sane people are designated insane, can be reversed, especially when perceptions of prestige, professional integrity, and diagnostic skills are at risk. In another hospital, whose staff was aware of Rosenhan’s embarrassing revelations, the staff unanimously doubted such errors could occur in their hospital, clearly demonstrating the blind trust people place in science, authority figures, and institutional integrity.

The hospital was informed that during the following three months, one or more pseudo-patients would attempt admission. Each staff member, including attendants, nurses, psychiatrists, physicians, and psychologists, evaluated 193 patients. Forty-one patients were strongly considered pseudo-patients by at least one staff member. Twenty-three were suspected by at least one psychiatrist. Nineteen were suspected by one psychiatrist and one staff member.

The research group had not sent any pseudo-patients to the hospital during the three months.

In the Rosenhan study, normal behaviors were misinterpreted so they conformed to the label *abnormal*. Such labels produced their own realities, causes, effects, and self-fulfilling prophecies. Psychiatric diagnoses are rarely found later to be in error, in contrast to other medical diagnoses, where errors are commonplace and constantly corrected, usually without stigmatic consequences. Psychiatric labels stick like a tattoo that boldly states: “INADE-

QUATE!” It is almost impossible to prove yourself sane, but relatively easy to be proven insane.

There are many comparable SFPs in daily life. Consider the SFP effects of a judicial label—with a court’s godlike judgment of *guilty*—for virtually any crime. Incarceration under the stereotype “criminal” sets in motion an entire complex of SFPs that doubtfully serve society’s interests.<sup>2</sup>

Test psychologists, a major industry, absurdly continue to believe that they can test people and animals with scientific objectivity. *Stigmatic stereotypes* with SFP potentials are regularly established through tests by school counselors, personnel administrators, and—the most devastating perpetrator of stereotypical labels—the mass-communication media. In one study, teachers were told that certain students (actually chosen at random) had tested as gifted children. It was observed that the teachers then lavished special attention on those students and this in turn evoked superior performance. On the other hand, “slow learner” labels have actually created and sustained the condition they presumed to describe.<sup>3</sup>

SFPs are uncomfortable to examine. They can threaten self-images of sanity, along with superstitious faith in science, reason, individual autonomy, truth, and God. The discovery that humans create their own realities—or have it done for them by media—can be shattering for those immersed in fantasy, which in some cultures includes almost everyone.

SFPs do not happen only to innocent bystanders. They are utilized deliberately, with specific premeditated intent. For the mechanism to function effectively, however, SFPs must be believed, perceived as factual from a high-credibility source, and presented as a functional aspect of reality. Only then can an SFP have a clear effect upon the present, thereby succeeding.

Stereotypical labels victimize both the person to whom they are applied and the labeler. Whether ethnic, celebrity images, product or brand generalizations, or psychiatric diagnoses, labels dehumanize everyone they touch. They evoke fear, envy, distrust, and the treatment of individuals as dehumanized objects. Dehumanization is actually the planned objective of much celebrity publicity, in which a person is merchandised as a sex object, a supermoral paragon of virtue, or an omniscient economic or religious prophet.

Manipulative images are often constructed for political, religious, business, or military leaders. Anyone who is made to appear too honest, or too anything for that matter, should be instantly distrusted.

The pioneer Menninger Psychiatric Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, discontinued diagnostic labeling of patients. Instead, a system of team evaluations was initiated to develop operational diagnoses and prognoses—tentative definitions, continually changed during treatment programs in response to changing patient needs. As might have been expected, Menninger was criticized for his refusal to cooperate with institutional psychiatry. British psychiatrist R. D. Laing made a similar attempt to circumvent diagnostic labels in his London Tavistock Clinic during the 1960s.

The *Diagnostic Criteria, DSM III*, published by the American Psychiatric Association is a catalogue of absurd and damaging nonsense. It is difficult to find a copy of the *DSM III*, which is often kept on the restricted list in medical-school libraries, concealed from patients and the general public. The secrecy, of course, makes the book irresistible to patients, who eventually will find copies. Indeed, such a dictionary of projective, stigmatic stereotypes does have administrative and legal functions. The *DSM III* has very little to do with the so-called mental disorders and their treatment. If taken seriously, the definitions lock both physician and patient into a system of mutual expectations from which it may be impossible for either to be extricated.

As psychological descendants of Greek drama's Oedipus, who fulfilled a tragic prophecy while attempting to avoid it, we continue to fulfill prophecies through attempts to escape. Societies arm themselves to avoid war, thereby ensuring the inevitability of war. Profitable war industries provide short-term employment and economic benefits. Armaments, however, are a disastrous economic drain in a world of diminishing, finite resources. They exhaust any society's resources, thereby increasing the likelihood of conflict. The investment is more damaging than mere wasted raw materials. A truck will earn its investment back many times during its existence. A tank, missile, or warplane, after a brief period of non-economic use, becomes obsolete and must be scrapped in favor of an even more uneconomic new model.

The megatonnage in the world's current nuclear-weapons stock-

piles is enough to kill 58 billion people—every person now living—twelve times. In a world spending \$800 billion annually for military programs, one adult in three cannot read and write, one person in four is hungry. Four times as many war deaths have occurred in the forty years since World War II as during the preceding forty years (see Sivard, p. 5).

SFP entrapment is a powerful and deadly quagmire—the source of much of the paranoid fear purposely engineered to fuel the profitable armaments industry. The astonishingly simple mechanism is still invisible to most people because what they perceive as their vested interest profits from repression instead of knowledge. It is actually quite difficult *not to know something*, but always possible if the price is right.

### We Think, We Think, We Think . . .

Ads and public relations are especially vicious in their potential to invent reality in the service of products, ideas, profits, or individuals. Surprisingly few appreciate the extent to which they have been systematically engineered, assimilated into thinking they think for themselves. In his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler summarized the ideal character of advertising: "All propaganda must be so popular and on such an intellectual level, that even the most stupid of those toward whom it is directed will understand it. People can be made to perceive paradise as hell, and the other way around, to consider the most wretched sort of life as paradise." Similar conversations can be heard in virtually any ad and PR office. This is what they do for a living.

Once humans believe unquestionably they think for themselves, protective, critical postures relax. They can be conditioned in any direction, into almost any construction of reality. While victims babble to themselves endlessly about freedom of choice, individualism, truth, facts, reality, and even God's will, they mindlessly conform to media-constructed consumption patterns and self-fulfilling prophecies. To protect yourself is actually quite simple. Programmed perceptions of reality can be critically dangerous to your health, but only if they are believed blindly with faith and

conviction. *Beware of blind faith in anything or anybody, including yourself.*

There are always three alternatives in knowledge: *you know, you do not know but could*, and—the largest, most important alternative—*the unknowable*. Humans compulsively invent verbalisms, or labels, that substitute for knowledge and sustain the pretense that they know more than they actually do. Institutions perpetuate the nonsense for legal, insurance, funding, or administrative convenience. Media do it to sell, persuade, and manage the perception of markets.

Further, there is the question of behavior adaptation to environmental circumstances. Psychiatric patients often appear sane outside the hospital, but insane within—perhaps owing to their forced adaptation to a strange, depersonalized environment. It is never easy to appear sane in an insane world, as anyone knows who has opposed nuclear weapons, environmental degradation, and the exploitation of victims of poverty, greed, dishonesty, and ideological bigotry.

Another catch-22 appears, however, in this attempt to critically evaluate perceptual constructions with SFP potentialities, to differentiate between fantasy and reality. The destruction of one perceptual construction only results in another construction. The best one can hope for are improved constructions with greater potentials for human kindness, tolerance, survival, and adjustment. Any perceptual construction remains a very tentative view of always changing reality.

Humans detest uncertainty. Uncertainties produce anxieties. To reduce anxiety, if no factual structure is readily available, humans will simply invent one or accept a ready-to-wear media reality structure. People constantly compare themselves with others whom they perceive as similar to themselves. These perceptions, of course, are fictional constructs.

The personal conviction that one can accomplish a goal increases the likelihood of reaching the goal. The perception of volition or freedom to decide among options constitutes a powerful motivating influence, even when—or particularly when—such freedom does not actually exist. Humans strive to impose order, meaning, and structure upon the world they perceive around them. They attempt to control events and relationships in which they are immersed,

but the more they perceive themselves in control of options, the less they are actually in control.

To optimize outcomes, always keep as many options as possible open as long as possible, in every situation. Behavior can be viewed as an endless sequence of choices between actions, inactions, alternatives, thoughts, and futures, focused upon the conscious pursuit of a goal. Unconscious potentialities, too, should not be ignored.

### The Uncertain Certainty

Self-fulfilling prophecies regularly appear in relationships between nations. They are rarely recognized, obscured by fantasies and delusions emanating from nationalistic or ideological chauvinism, repressions promoted by vested interests, or conscious strategies to manipulate reality in the pursuit of power and profit. Take, for example, the relationship between the U.S. and Nicaragua, where the initially moderate leftist Sandinistas deposed the forty-year-old Somoza family dictatorship. The Sandinistas nationalized numerous U.S. corporations, which had strongly supported and financed the ruthless dictatorship. The list included the infamous United Fruit Company, a subsidiary of the W. R. Grace Corporation, a major supporter and beneficiary of the Reagan political administration.

After the Reagan administration began in 1981, U.S. policy in Central America was to overthrow the socialist-leaning Sandinista party. After the way the U.S. government had supported Somoza, Nicaraguans were antagonistic about further U.S. intervention. The anti-U.S. public opinion was predictable and, had it been adequately handled by diplomatic efforts, would have eventually moderated. Over the following six years, however, the U.S. escalated military and economic pressures upon Nicaragua, an impoverished nation of about three million citizens—roughly equal to the population of the city of Chicago. Nicaraguan hatred of the U.S. increased, as consequently did the power of the Sandinistas.

The stated objective was to prevent Nicaragua from forming communist-bloc alliances. Harbors were mined by CIA-sponsored terrorists, international financial standing was demolished, and borders were subjected to constant attack by U.S.-sponsored in-

surgents officered by remnants of the hated Somoza National Guard. Each act of aggression and terrorism further united Sandinista leadership and strengthened their authority over the population. The Sandinistas were also forced into greater and greater dependence on communist-bloc alliances, and greater and greater alienation from the U.S. Had the U.S. really wished to save Nicaragua from communism, the money wasted on terrorism, sabotage, and attempts at destabilization could have been used instead to rebuild the Nicaraguan economy, with enough left for every Nicaraguan student to spend a year at Harvard.

U.S. policies—and overt intervention—actually brought about those conditions they were supposedly meant to prevent. One by one, the available options were reduced. Rigid stereotypical definitions of “Marxist-communist revolutionary ideology,” coupled with simplistic cause-and-effect fantasies, closed doors on both sides of the conflict.

The Reagan administration propagandized U.S. public opinion with the fantasy that if the Contras were not supported, Central America would soon become a Soviet satellite. This was a factually insupportable cause-and-effect prediction. The SFP, of course, had little to do with communism but was a useful ploy in support of increased defense spending and corporate economic domination of Central America.

Similar self-fulfilling prophecies occurred in the early period of Arbenz's Guatemala, Castro's Cuba, and Allende's Chile. Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos were, perhaps, the most tragic of U.S. self-fulfilling prophecies. The prediction of a communist takeover was virtually ensured by violent, ruthless U.S. intervention. Once the prophecy became fulfilled, the perpetrators confirmed their extraordinary good judgment for having predicted cause and effect. The final statement, “We told you so,” always deleted the qualifier, “because we made it happen!”

Leaders who allege they will initiate change rarely change much of anything. They simply relabel the old with new words or phrases. Any attempt at abrupt socioeconomic-political change inevitably triggers counterreactions. Actual change, or what is perceptually measurable as change, constantly occurs with individuals, groups, and nations. But the enormously complex variables of social change make it utterly unpredictable, completely beyond the

ability of anyone to control, understand, or even consciously recognize.

For example, criticism of communism is not a fight against communism. The words cannot lead to change. Words can actually make change more improbable. Criticism produces a defense that actually serves to strengthen the resolve of dissidents. Consider, for a moment, the effects of presidential rhetoric at a time of serious world tensions.

Ronald Reagan throughout his political career slandered the U.S.S.R. at every opportunity. In a widely quoted 1983 speech, he called the U.S.S.R. “the Evil Empire, the focus of evil in our time [alluding to the popular motion-picture fantasy *Star Wars*]. We are being told that we can sit down and negotiate with this enemy of ours, that there is a little right and a little wrong on both sides. How do you compromise between good and evil? How do you say to this enemy that we can compromise our belief in God with his dialectical determinism [philosophical jargon for what Soviets call scientific method]? How do you compromise with men who say we have no soul, there is no hereafter, there is no God?”

Demonstrating the power of stereotypes in U.S. political life, the disgraced former President Richard Nixon frequently admonished, “Communists are rats! When you try to kill a rat, you must know how to shoot straight!” Such statements by Nixon and Reagan had nothing to do with communism, but much to do with the gullibility of the U.S. public to whom they spoke.

Rhetoric like this has served many internal political objectives, not the least of which were increased taxation, military appropriations, and the diversion of public opinion away from real and significant issues. When the 280 million Soviets heard about Reagan's speech—Soviet leadership is far from stupid—they united behind their government. Resolve to oppose the U.S. was strengthened. Such rhetoric, which has continued for well over half a century, actually strengthened communism and the U.S.S.R. leadership's power, and sustained the dangerous status quo between the two nations.

These and similar when-then-because fantasies would be outrageously humorous examples of self-deception were it not that people die needlessly each year as a result. During a conversation about SFPs with a career diplomat, I asked, “If we know about

SFPs, why do we permit ourselves to be manipulated into such situations?" He replied, "Simply because we usually win. We invent and control the SFPs and are powerful enough to put them into motion. Even when we appear to lose, we win. When Castro, for example, appeared to win, he really lost. His presence, forty miles off the coast of Florida, justified continuing increases in U.S. military and economic appropriations. Such funding could never have been pushed through Congress without Castro." There always appears another layer to the perceptual onion.

It provides little consolation that any student of Soviet affairs could discover a rich harvest of SFPs in the U.S.S.R.'s internal and foreign policies of the past half century. It is frightening, indeed, to realize that world leaders are no more sophisticated or even knowledgeable about SFPs than the average man or woman.

### Ad-Media SFPs

As manufacturer of cultural value systems, commercial mass media set up the society for a nightmare of unfulfilled and unfulfillable expectations, tragic self-fulfilling prophecies, and a myriad of self-sealing premises. Constant pandering through sensory manipulation devalues, dehumanizes, and mechanistically sexualizes everything that is sold or purchased. The self-fulfilling prophecies of the ad media, however, are the opposite of what they appear. The reverse, or negative, side of the expectation is fulfilled. Ads say little about products or brands. The pitch is based upon flattering, patronizing, idealized descriptions of consumers and what the product has done for them. Consumers are endlessly stereotyped as happy, fulfilled, successful, sexually desirable and available, independent, young, knowledgeable, and emotionally secure—a message of flattery. "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?"

"Narcissus Narcosis" was Marshall McLuhan's description of the media-induced stupor where audiences sit mindlessly before the tube, projecting themselves into the video mirror. Narcissus was the Greek god who fell in love with his reflection in a pool of water. He was eventually destroyed by the wise, noble, kind, good, honest, and beautiful creature who smiled lovingly at him

from the reflection. He never discovered he had fallen in love with himself.

The self-flattering platitudes of ad media are constant anesthesia against the intrusion of reality into daily life. The implied cause-and-effect reward for purchases is the healthy, handsome, good life with inexhaustible sexual opportunity and abundant sources of sensual gratification reflected by the highly paid, successful, idealized models—the most beautiful of people. Unfortunately for hapless consumers, these rewards are either nonexistent or unobtainable. Real life, as well as anyone can perceive it, is never this simple or consistent. The large-bosomed model cannot be sexually enjoyed or obtained along with the shoe polish she is employed to advertise. If consumers were really capable of thinking for themselves, as they believe they do, they would avoid any product hyped with large mammary glands as a lie. The only sensual indulgence available through an ad illustration would be a masturbatory fantasy.

Joyous, friendly, social acceptance as a strong, independent man or woman does not magically occur via the purchase of a light beer. Just the opposite is closer to reality. Most beer drinkers, especially those in bars, are lonely, isolated, dependent, insecure individuals. Ad models are paid to seem as though a drink or cigarette enhances their consummate social popularity. These fantasies are usually the opposite of the consumer's reality. That is the reason they work. Ads promise that if you buy the product, it will make up for your deficiencies. Uncertain individuals who fall into the ad trap are often conformists who constantly seek the fantasized adulation and approval conformity supposedly brings. The next time an opportunity arises, watch someone reveal their social apprehensions and dependence with a cigarette as a social prop. During the addiction-withdrawal period, anti-smoking clinics utilize videotapes of patients smoking as reinforcement. Smokers find these tapes emotionally very disturbing. Once the smoker perceives what other people have perceived—the ill-at-ease, dependent, nervous, infantile sucking behaviors involved in smoking—kicking the habit becomes easier.

Stereotypical role models from ads, motion pictures, TV, or rock music—perhaps desirable images on the surface—disintegrate into a nightmare of unfulfillable human expectations on close exami-

nation. The media image is a lie, but if not examined too carefully it promises eroticized fantasies vastly more enchanting and narcotizing than anything available in reality.

Consumers eventually discover the fantasies were merely hype, but blame themselves for their deficiencies. The good life never materializes, even after endless product purchases and loyalties. The unfulfilled promise must then be internalized. Consumers slowly acquire the self-perception of losers. Hopelessly entrapped in purchasing behavior syndromes, the well-trained consumer will buy something when depressed, disappointed, frustrated, angry, rejected, lonely, and bored, having been exhaustively trained to deal with problems of emotional adjustment through purchasing. But the expectations the ad promotes are never fulfilled. At best, relief is short-term. Effect becomes indistinguishable from cause—the snake again bites its tail. The well-integrated consumer perceives a world where everyone is getting it all—everyone, that is, except the loyal, generous, trusting, obedient consumer who has metamorphosed into a buying machine. Another product and brand is tried, another lover chosen, another social group discovered, a new hairstyle tried, another job found, another residence purchased, another fantasy pursued, and another, and another, and another . . . Reality perceptions fade and superimpose upon one another further and further into the fantasies of media.

False expectations ensure ultimate disappointment and failure—the diametric opposite of what the ad media presents. To the advertiser, fulfilled consumers are undesirable. Satisfied consumers might withdraw, disengage from the system, stop buying.

### The Twentieth-Century Sisyphus

The consumer slowly evolves into a modern Sisyphus, trained to push the heavy boulder of hope for an identity, for purpose, acceptance, happiness, and fulfillment, to the summit of a steep hill. The boulder then rolls, once more, to the bottom. The consumer pushes it again to the top—again, again, and again until the end. The motto of a consumer society reads, “I consume, therefore I exist!” The expectations promoted by the ad media, which lead to the self-fulfilling prophecies, emphasize the short-

comings, deficiencies, and weaknesses individuals perceive in themselves. Negative self-esteem is constantly reinforced. The consumer evolves from loser into superloser.

Drug and alcohol addiction have their roots in ads. For nearly a century, the U.S. population was ad-educated to seek chemical solutions to problems of emotional adjustment. Booze, tobacco, pills, dope—all serve the same objective. There is no reason, the ads teach, to experience the slightest discomfort, depression, or pain. Be happy, well-adjusted, ever optimistic, tranquil, self-assured, socially accepted, and loved—on top of the world. If you cannot get there through alcohol, try tobacco, or pick up analgesics, antidepressants, tranquilizers, or happy pills of several dozen varieties. There is a drink or pill for every minor or major symptom. Once integrated, you do not need the symptom, only an *expectation* of the symptom. Ads introduced, rationalized, validated, legitimated, and authorized chemical-drug consumption at staggering levels. It is a very profitable business, except for users—many of whom end up as addicts.

Every political administration over the past century has, at least in words, taken a strong position against illegal drug usage. It is comparable to being against sin, child molestation, and welfare cheats. Legal drugs, that profitable business, are ignored. Distinction between *legal* and *illegal* is another of the perceptual fictions, but a real vote getter. At unconscious perceptual levels, where ads have their most powerful impact, consumers are propagandized to favor the good life you get from drug-chemical products. *Perceived product benefits*, not legal distinctions, motivate and enrapture consumers. While manufacturers and politicians play games with legalisms, ads milk consumers to accept and integrate drug-chemical consumption into U.S. culture.

As the consumption of *legal* drugs—alcohol, tobacco, and pharmaceutical products—proliferated over the past half century, so did the *illegal* drugs—marijuana, heroin, LSD, and more recently cocaine and crack. Illegal drug consumption in the U.S. is now estimated to be a \$220 million daily business by the National Institutes of Health. It is curious no one in public life has noted the parallel increase in consumption of both legal and illegal drugs. Judicial distinctions have nothing to do with psychological distinctions. The death wish is regularly manipulated at the subliminal

level by alcohol, tobacco, and pharmaceutical ads. The mere designation *illegal* provides powerful consumption appeal for many individuals. Illegal consumption is romantically perceived as an act of liberation from imposed restrictions, a defiance of authority. During 1986, there were an estimated 4 million cocaine addicts, with 5,000 new users added daily to the population.

The Chivas Regal "What's News?" ad appeared for over five years in numerous magazines—*Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, et cetera (fig. 27)—at an estimated cost of \$4 to \$5 million for space. With its copy, "Can you think of anything that gives you a better return on your investment?" the ad objective is to establish Chivas Regal as a complement to business, a large portion of which is supposedly conducted over Scotch. The return on your investment of time, effort, and entertainment will be improved with Chivas Regal twelve-year-old Scotch whiskey. The implied prophecy is success, money, power—approved objectives of business. Who could argue against the logic, truth, and good sense of such an ad, even though placed in a periodical context of frivolous appeals to sensuality, indulgence, and superficial distractions? Chivas drinkers are leaders who appreciate the best. Drinking Scotch smooths the climb to the top, helps ensure success. The prophecy appears clear, at least at one level of perception.

The *Wall Street Journal*, with its daily front-page feature, "What's News?" is an icon of business. The Chivas bottle beside it is open, the contents less than full. Presumably the Scotch on the rocks has just been poured. Curiously, the painted replica of the *Journal*, not the real thing, has been indistinctly lettered, as if out of focus. Except for the words *Business and Finance* and *World*, the lettering is obscured. Take a moment, though, to scan the newspaper image. See if you can read any other words.

The word *sluts* can be perceived in the third line of the headline in the left column. Part of a paragraph in the left-column story is distinct and readable, part undecipherable. One word in the text stands out, *banning*. These appear, at first, isolated and irrelevant words, but they have been carefully crafted into the newspaper replica. The words would never be perceived by a reader consciously. Unconsciously, however, even the smallest, most inconspicuous detail could be very important.

Painted obscurely into the ice cubes and glass are various skulls.

One is in the center left of the glass, anamorphically distorted (fig. 53). Another skull appears upside down under the liquid surface just left of center. Skulls and other dead imagery are common in alcohol ads. They appeal to the death wish.

Just to the right of the anamorphic skull appears a standing, robed figure, wearing a peaked cap (fig. 54). Few people wear peaked caps—Catholic bishops, cardinals, and the Pope. Kneeling before him appears a woman. Her face is surrounded by long hair, her shoulders are bare, her gown having slipped off her shoulders. The waist of her gown appears above her billowing skirt. The woman's right arm extends downward from her exposed shoulder, her forearm extends upward. She appears to be holding something with her right hand pointed at her open mouth.

Fellatio with the Pope in an ice cube: a bizarre subliminal strategy to manipulate consumers into the purchase of Chivas Regal Scotch. Most readers will find the embedded obscenity unsettling, at the very least. Considering the kind of world that has been constructed in the name of unrestrained enterprise, with every neighborhood boasting its so-called "adult bookstore," fellatio in an ice cube may have become a normal expectation.

One additional surprise appears in the Scotch on the rocks. Just to the right of the two figures appears a familiar version of Christ (fig. 55), patiently observing the action in the adjacent ice cube.

Though quite small in proportion to the bottle and glass, inconspicuously located, these images will be perceived instantaneously at the unconscious level by anyone who even glances at the ad. At no point in the perceptual process would meaning and significance emerge in conscious awareness. The obscene and taboo representations have a powerful and enduring unconscious effect on those who perceive the ad for even an instant. This ad would have its most powerful motivating effect upon individuals who have strong inhibitions about sex coupled with conservative religious convictions. The two perspectives often go together.

The real name of the game, of course, is sensual indulgence, the reward for success both in business and quality Scotch. The Scotch provides a transport to the "banned" "sluts" mentioned in the *Wall Street Journal*. The taboo world of sex, death, the Christ figure, the skulls, and self-destruction is an end to the hypocrisy and conflicting value systems of modern life. If the businessman

happens to be going that way, as many appear to be, Chivas Regal—as the ad suggests—is the way to go. Chivas delivers!

At one level, the conventional road to success—work, preoccupation with Wall Street, business, and finance. On another level, self-destructive, guilt-ridden indulgence that invariably defeats success or achievement. Anyone in business, government, finance, or the professions today who is perceived a drinker turns on warning lights in the heads of peers and superiors. Contrary to ad misrepresentations, the alcohol drinker is publicly perceived as a pathetic loser, not as a great guy.

Simplistic, verbalized notions of cause and effect, if strongly believed, lead humans toward self-fulfilling prophecies. The SFP, once established, takes on a life of its own, creates its own reality, which would not have developed without the initial cause-and-effect assumptions. SFP expectations often bring about what was most feared and anticipated. Mathematician Nigel Howard offered a counterstrategy to SFPs: “If persons become aware of a theory concerning their behavior, they are no longer bound by the theory. They are free to disobey. The best theory is powerless in the face of antitheory.”

## 10 | THE SELF-SEALING WORLD OF OBJECTIVITY

A truly objective world, totally devoid of all subjectivity, would—for that very reason—be unobservable.

Werner Heisenberg, Nobel Laureate in physics

Any form of *double entendre* reminds us that words, as well as people, are capable of hidden meanings, that the very language we use to communicate with each other is not always completely “sincere.” Sincerity actually serves to conceal irony, understatement, wit, and deception.

Martin Evans, *America: The View from Europe*

The great enemy of truth is not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and realistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebearers.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy,  
Yale commencement address, 1962

Much of what is known about human communication was learned in clinical psychology and psychiatry. The most common symptom of known mental disorders is the impaired ability to utilize language effectively. As with many systems, language is revealed more profoundly through malfunctions than through more-or-less normal usage. Language behaviors perceived as normal may actually function quite abnormally in terms of survival and adjustment.

To understand ourselves, we must somehow understand others. But, to comprehend others, we must first learn to understand ourselves. Understanding can only be achieved through language. This law of communication is, of course, a paradox, an Ouroboros. Much, perhaps most, of our verbal and nonverbal language operates without conscious awareness. Even the most minute, subtle behaviors communicate information that defines and modifies relationships. Humans are far more perceptually sensitive than they wish to believe. Important information is constantly exchanged, a process of which neither sender nor receiver is consciously aware. Often, there is an unconscious desire to exclude or not deal with what is actually going on.

Humans can feel or sense, act or react, without words. Thinking, however, requires verbal or mathematical language—syntax, structure, definitions, both stated and implied meanings. These are perceived at both conscious and unconscious levels. To make the process even more complex, there appears no universal language system—one simple system through which everyone can make themselves understood. Languages are enmeshed within the cultural systems from which they evolved. All have similarities, as well as differences. The study of any language-cultural system is a formidable undertaking.

To find out what is going on at any particular moment in a language system—especially the one in which you participate—is extremely difficult. Observers can never be isolated from their observations. Humans are a part of what they perceive, abstract into language, and communicate to others. The relationship between language and the realities language attempts to describe—as it may or may not be consciously perceived—is a matter of more-or-less rather than either/or.

Humans, moreover, live at the mercy of influences they are

unconscious of and over which they have no control, but which powerfully affect their behavior and destinies. Though some may manage relationships more sensitively than others, there will always exist more that is unknown and unknowable than what is selectively perceived as known. Regardless of how cautious they might be, humans influence others and are influenced themselves by unconscious motives and strategies that might be unacceptable if consciously considered.

The most dangerous and destructive of human illusions is the assumption of objectivity—*one reality, one truth, one perspective* from which to perceive the world. Individual perceptions of reality have similarities and differences. Yet linguistically these variations are ignored, smoothed out, and fused together into a simplistic illusion. Objectivity myths become even more threatening when attached to ideological zeal that demands the world be enlightened—whether or not the enlightenment is desired. Objectivity is a myth both in science and everyday life, a fantasy that often controls day-to-day relationships.

Unconscious biases, traditional beliefs, and tacit assumptions strongly influence perceptions and decisions. Bias becomes critical when people convince themselves they are completely objective and have discovered “absolute truth.” Objectivity assumptions entangle individuals in unknown and unknowable biases from which, once they are entrapped, it becomes difficult for them to liberate themselves. Conclusions achieved through ignorance, blindness, or indifference to perceptual processes should frighten everyone. As a practical matter, however, biased fantasies, delusions, and mythologies are often compulsively and popularly accepted as the real thing.

Illusions can be highly contagious. Once an explanation from a high-credibility source is believed and accepted, contrary information usually produces defensive, rationalized explanations of the myth.<sup>4</sup> Such explanations become part of *self-sealing conjectures*, found in extremist, fanatical, ideological, religious, or political postures. These are assumptions that cannot be refuted. Refutations will be either ignored or rejected offhand. Conjecture based on fantasy becomes pseudoscientific superstition that can lead to neurotic or even psychotic behaviors among individuals or groups. Irrefutable conjecture has been responsible for a wide variety of

tragedies, atrocities, and catastrophes throughout world history. Self-sealing premises lead to absolute certainties in such matters as racial superiority-inferiority, ideological pretensions, and prejudicial views of communists, capitalists, Jews, women, Catholics, Presbyterians, atheists, homosexuals, witches, and others perceived in a culture as deviants. Societies have, at various moments, tragically considered these prejudicial perceptual constructions *sane*, even though they often invoked *insane* behaviors.

### Ideological Entrapments

When individuals or groups become committed to self-sealing premises, they are compelled to resist—often fiercely—counter-information. They compulsively attack their critics. The committed ideologue's perceived simple solutions to complex problems have been achieved at the cost of anxiety and/or frustrated expectations. Psychological investment in the premise is very high. The risk that these solutions may be compromised, sacrificed, or modified becomes a threat to self-esteem, social prestige, and even identity. A self-fulfilling prophecy, predicated upon a perceptually fixed cause-and-effect illusion, has been triggered into action. The entire structure is a perceptual fantasy, a construction having little to do with reality-oriented perception. The self-sealing premise often appears an early symptom of emotional disturbance.

This describes, for example, what has occurred over decades between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. The adversaries are entrapped in self-sealing, self-fulfilling prophecies that sooner or later will probably destroy world civilization.

Ad media relentlessly create viable commercial investments for advertisers, who, in turn, create fantasy worlds where populations are immersed in what they have been persuaded to believe they wish to perceive about themselves. To optimize the returns on marketing investments, societies are divided and subdivided into demographic and psychographic categories, each marketed separately or in combinations. The process creates a tribal mode of self-perception and behavior. Society's perception of itself polarizes between "ins" and "outs"—they're either for us or against us, friends or enemies, moral or immoral. The scenario is acted out

daily, in radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines. The tribe refuses to accede to goals that reflect common or mutual objectives. The fearful tribe may, for example, become increasingly resistant to appeals for restrained population growth. It may even race to overpopulate other societies.

The mechanism is currently apparent in antiabortion campaigns masquerading as morality crusades. Antiabortion beliefs are not the issue; they are only the up-front manifestation. Protesters are curiously aligned on a spectrum of issues—religious fanaticism, anticommunism, deviant-bashing, and a sense of being threatened from the outside. They represent a small minority within the U.S. population.

The tribe typically seeks to control internal and external resources politically, militarily, or diplomatically. Justice and liberty decline as the fear of outsiders and deviants intensifies or is perceptually intensified by the media. Threats, both real and fantasized, strengthen group identity. The tribe mobilizes its resources for action. Xenophobia becomes a political virtue. Nonconformists within the tribe are more severely punished and restricted.

The grim history of world civilizations, none of which escaped eventual extinction, provides a chilling chronicle of the tribal process. The tribe sooner or later goes to war, often disastrously for both winner and loser. No nation or society has ever been immune to the process. Tribal behavior may be an unconscious, biologically inherited human predisposition. Those involved, however, rarely discover consciously what is being done to them or what they are doing to themselves and others.

Day-to-day reality perceptions that support traditional cultural perspectives are just perceptual constructions—delusions that must continually be shored up and strengthened. A substantial portion of day-to-day energy and behavior must be devoted toward this end. Self-sealing premises, if they are to be sustained, usually require facts to be adapted to fit reality perceptions, instead of the other way around.

For example, to be anti-U.S.S.R. is to be pro-U.S. in the United States, and vice versa in the Soviet Union. All the nations in between also become entrapped in the system. If you are not for us, you are against us. Such constructions are usually designed by clever people who know better, for naïve people who do not. They

are simply a technique of mass manipulation. You cannot trust the U.S.S.R., the U.S., or anyone uncommitted to one or the other. Soviet-bashing competes relentlessly with U.S.-bashing, or vice versa. Never forget the vice versa. All verbal fantasies are reversible, interchangeable, and mutually reinforcing. They are also completely childish—albeit deadly—nonsense.

### The Friendly Slot Machine

The slot-machine player is another example of someone adapting facts to fit reality perceptions, a behavior mechanism common to most individuals, groups, or even nations. The mechanism has an ancient, unknown origin in human evolution and may be part of the human genetic inheritance.

Slot machines cannot be beaten. They are inexhaustible, mechanical-electrical, impersonal devices that operate strictly in terms of statistical probability. The casino gambling industry, through clever media manipulations, perpetuates the fantasy that “anyone can win.” Only luck is required. Luck, as anyone familiar with the gaming industry knows, is for losers! The empirical, statistical facts of the slot machine are well concealed. An individual’s statistical chance of leaving the casino ahead of the game is a small fraction of 1%. No professional gambler would accept odds so stacked against winning. Casinos do not gamble. In a gamble, outcomes are indeterminate. The outcome in a casino is always certain, always the same. Casinos know precisely what they are doing. The hapless, deluded clients actually play to lose. The only question in a casino is the length of time required.

Under the intense, media-managed expectation of winning, the slot-machine player begins to perceive patterns in the fruit displays. There seem to be regular patterns of near wins, combinational frequencies in the cherries, oranges, lemons, and bars. The perceptual fantasy is much like that of Dr. Skinner’s crazy pigeons. Near wins become as rewarding as the actual wins that return coins. Players perceptually construct these patterns, invent them, fantasy-project their significance. To encourage and reinforce the process, new slot machines include electronic tunes—symbolic rewards—that play when certain near-win combinations occur. The

tunes reinforce or cue the fantasized perceptions—like the electronic, controlled laughter injected into television comedies. When an actual win infrequently occurs, the electronic jingle becomes a virtual symphonic chorus.

The slot machine is the ultimate money-milking machine. Curiously, these machines are perceived by their victims as fair, objective, even friendly adversaries. Some players personalize the machines into which they pump their money with human names or attributions. Anthropomorphic projections are encouraged by casino ads. One large Reno billboard boasted, “The hottest slots in the West!” An attractive model is posed on a table corner next to the slot machine, her legs suggestively spread apart, her genital area exposed.

Entire social, political, and economic systems are similarly organized around near-win reward systems. Product salesmen, ad executives, politicians, and others with something to sell frequently design these reward systems, which operate like the carrot on a stick that keeps the jackass (loser) moving along. Wherever rewards are infrequent, management objectives focus on keeping players in the game.

Military intelligence is similarly designed. We watch them watching us watch them trying to control the cherries, lemons, and oranges they hope will appear to *us* as real information. They, in turn, watch us watching them watch us trying to control the cherries, lemons, and oranges we hope will appear to *them* as real information. Meanwhile, both sides hop about like Skinner’s pigeons—one side’s absurd actions to the other’s absurd reactions. The extremely dangerous trouble in the silly game is the known, unknown, and unknowable fruit that keeps turning up. Each side jiggles their fruit to outwit the other, and ends up outwitting themselves. People who take either the CIA or the KGB seriously also probably believe they can win in Las Vegas, that Coke is the “real thing,” or that Wheaties is “the breakfast of champions.”

In the slot machine, the fruit and bar patterns are totally random and meaningless. The machines simply follow their programmed, statistical payout rules. Anything else perceived about a slot machine is pure fantasy. Among compulsive gamblers—gambling is highly addictive—the machines appear to possess an inner life and function with predictable regularity. These individuals, committed

to self-sealed premises achieved at substantial costs in anxiety and expectations, cannot be persuaded otherwise. Their self-sealing convictions are rewarded often enough by actual or symbolic rewards—just often enough to keep them playing. Actual money rewards, nevertheless, are always a minuscule portion of the players' investment.

The need to search consciously and unconsciously for cause-and-effect patterns, regularities within perceptual environments, lies deep within the circuitry and chemistry of the brain. Individuals, unaware of the infinite variety of perceptual realities or options always available, assume there is only *one* reality, *one* cause, *one* interpretation, *one* option, *one* objective, *one* course of action. Their sealed premises are usually supported by others similarly entrapped.

Anyone who presents alternative options risks being considered evil, insane, or subversive. It is next to impossible to explain to an addicted player how a slot machine operates. Your explanation, no matter how well intentioned, will provoke defensive aggressiveness.

It appears virtually impossible to convince a government bureaucrat that the only way to win the dangerous, prolonged struggle between communism and capitalism—a perceptual struggle constructed for power and profit—is simply not to play the game.<sup>15</sup> This conclusion would drastically rearrange profit and power structures on both sides. The conflict endures because certain groups on both sides are served by it. The consciously perceived, or alleged, reasons for the conflict have nothing to do with what is really going on.

During the course of over 300 research projects this author conducted for private corporations and governments, it became apparent that problem-solving was rarely a simple, objective enterprise. The notion that "truth" resolved problems was naïve in the extreme. Institutions hire expensive consultants and research specialists to confirm or reject decisions, perspectives, and perceived truths already apparent. Many institutions will accept failure or even annihilation before agreeing to reconceptualize their dilemmas and paradoxes. During corporate crises, this author usually attempted to provide at least three—preferably more—alternative solutions to each problem under study, each one more or less equally constructive and applicable. A fourth option was usually

added to the basic three at no additional cost: Do nothing! Permit the problem, or the perception of the problem, to work itself out. The fourth option was never acceptable. It was rarely an option anyone was willing to pay for, even though it might have resolved the dilemma. Managements compulsively insisted upon the correct and most profitable solution. Such simplistic perceptual conclusions continue to be responsible for countless failures in business, industry, and government throughout the world.

A perceived structure or pattern easily becomes a self-reinforcing delusion. Once the seemingly reasonable, often "scientific" premise has been accepted, delusions follow, through logical deductions. The self-sealed premise often takes on a life of its own. However, in terms of reality—or reality-oriented perceptions—it is usually not the truth or falsity of a delusion that is important; the delusion succeeds because of its mere existence or apparent rewards.

To manipulate reality on behalf of an objective, mere *suspicion* about an alternative's validity is often powerful enough. In the media competition for consumers or in political candidates' competition for voters, great effort is expended to create credible suspicion about opponents. Even minor doubts, once established, can expand effectively. One big lie, of course, feeds back into another big lie. Reality engineering is a major growth industry. Factual evidence is usually unnecessary, often undesirable. The more exaggerated the story, the more believable it can become if properly legitimized.<sup>16</sup> Fact-oriented perceptions become Silly Putty in the hands of anyone who understands perceptual vulnerabilities and how to exploit them.<sup>17</sup>

People generally cannot believe themselves so easily manipulated and controllable. This is precisely why they are so easy to manipulate and control.<sup>18</sup>

Cultural or ideological systems are engineered like casino slot machines. The conviction that members have free choice or volition, once established, makes them even less aware of contradictions, qualifications, and paradox. A substantial majority of citizens in both the U.S. and U.S.S.R., for example, believe their societies are free, democratic, and concerned with human rights. The question is of itself a conditioning device, though complete nonsense in any reality-oriented perception. Both societies ignore or observe human rights when doing so serves some internal or external

objective. The question is a matter of more-or-less, rather than either/or. Facts by the trainload could be generated to validate or discredit the view of either society. Yet each side believes with religious fervor its world is superior. The argument is comparable to two small boys arguing over who has the largest penis and finally over whether the comparisons will be made in the flaccid or tumescent state, or somewhere in between.

### Reality Is a Drag

Human history reveals a disturbing human inability to deal with reality-oriented perceptions—to comprehend empirical data, the rhetorical nature of questions, and complex arrays of the conscious and unconscious motives underlying arguments.

It appears far easier for humans to fantasize and project responsibility for decisions on some mystical principle, ideology, fate, secret metaphysical power, God, a prophet of God, or an omniscient, charismatic leader. Humans rarely consider that chance or probability—coupled with a handful of basic human needs and always limited resources controlled by ruling power elites—guide world destinies, have done so throughout history, and will likely continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Morality and justice usually depend upon the power to enforce rather than upon intellectual discourse, and so do perceptual realities.

As discussed, perceptual realities appear to exist on at least three levels: *macro*, *micro*, and *submicro*. At each level, perceptions can be measured and verified by more-or-less standard scales, calibrations, devices, mathematical relationships, and conscious agreements on these standards. Physical and biological properties can be established by experimental, repeatable, and verifiable proofs or refutations. Very few problems between humans cannot be resolved at this fact-oriented level of reality perception. The nightmares in human communication stem from an inability to agree on meanings, values, evaluations, perspectives, syntheses, and analyses. The rules are completely arbitrary. The fantasy of eternal truth frequently appears. Absurd arguments erupt over what really *is* and *is not*, and once verbally resolved, self-sealing premises take over.

The dilemma of human objectivity has often been portrayed in the arts. Lawrence Durrell's superb *Alexandria Quartet* tells the story of an exotic Middle Eastern woman from the unique, quite different perceptual realities of her lover, husband, physician, friends, and enemies. Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa's masterpiece *Rashomon* also probed subjectivity in the story of a rape told from the perspectives of the four individuals involved. Franz Kafka, the master of paradox, made perceptual variations of reality the basis for much of his literary work. Kafka's novel *The Trial* is one of the most disturbing expositions of perceptual relativity, paradox, and double binds. A man is tried for a crime but never discovers the charges, the witnesses, or the reasons for his conviction. He finally becomes convinced of his own guilt without discovering the nature of his crime.

One of the most discomforting expositions of perceptual reality appeared in the eighteenth-century works of the infamous, though curiously—perhaps insanely—brilliant, French Marquis D. A. F. de Sade. De Sade's writings never clarified for the reader whether they reflected *fantasy* or *reality*, or where one merged into the other. In his most well-known work, *Justine*, he wrote, "The mirror sees the man as beautiful, the mirror loves the man; another sees the man as frightful and hates him; and it is always the same being who produces the impressions." De Sade's attacks on *objective reality* and the conventional wisdoms of his day outraged France. His books were burned. His downfall was ensured by literary treatments of sadism and masochism—the most forbidden of literary themes. (The modern word *sadism* was derived from his name.) De Sade perceived that sadomasochistic potentialities were inherent in most humans. Though history does not verify his actual participation in these bizarre behaviors, de Sade was condemned to live most of his life in asylums.

In spite of reality-oriented information, even from high-credibility sources, humans are persistently reluctant to turn loose traditional reality perceptions. As has often been demonstrated over the centuries, cultures hold to perceptual fantasy constructions until death. In the world's history, few humans have been deterred by force, the threat of force, or even death. In spite of this, nations continue to believe brute force is the best way to control dissent

and deviance. In fact, brute force ensures dissent and deviance. Societies persist in this fantasy even when the only conceivable reward is self-annihilation.

### Your Asylum or Mine

All behaviors communicate reciprocally. Problems arise when misrepresentations, lies, or misinformation are introduced into the system, consciously or unconsciously, purposefully or accidentally. Since meaningful goals are rarely achieved without trust, awareness of manipulation is often repressed. At the unconscious level, though, lies are difficult to conceal. The manipulated usually know they are being manipulated, at some level of perception.

If a certain deception is perceived only by a small, low-status minority, the majority will consider them deviants—insane or bad. No matter how provable their allegations of deceit, deviants will likely be considered in need of therapy, punishment, or exclusion. In situations where the deceit is demonstrable in terms of reality-oriented perceptions, debriefing or therapy may entail reality distortions to refocus deviant perceptions to fit those of the majority. Should majority behavior be insane, attempts will be made to turn deviant minorities from sanity toward insanity. The process is apparent in educational, military, social, economic, and political institutions—and often appears a normal expectation of daily life.

Majority consensus is an overwhelming social force. Consensus is courted by every power structure in the world and is engineered by mass-media ads and public-relations techniques. The human need to be accepted—no matter how absurd or destructive such acceptance may be—extends deeply into the one basic imperative: *survival and adjustment*. There appears an innate willingness to compromise individual perceptions in favor of what appears—or is constructed to appear—as group consensus. Unfortunately, however, intellectual, social, and economic systems depend for new ideas, growth, and survival upon deviant innovators, not conformists.

The famous *double bind* is another usually conscious vehicle for behavioral disaster. In the double-bind situation, you are damned if you do something and equally damned if you do not. The double

bind is a product of self-sealing premises that usually operate at a nonconscious level.

Anthropologist Gregory Bateson tells the story of a New Guinea tribe that held an annual festival with neighboring tribes during which men dressed as women, wild alcoholic binges ensued, and sexual restraints were unleashed. It was, apparently, quite a party. When well-intentioned Christian missionaries arrived, they perceived the annual orgy as sinful, the work of the devil. They persuaded the tribe to abolish the festival. The tribe soon began murderous conflicts with other tribes. The annual orgy had served to resolve intertribal tensions for many generations. Now tribesmen were damned by the missionaries if the festivals continued and condemned to homicidal conflicts if they did not.

The double bind is a no-win paradox in which astonishing numbers of humans spend portions of their lives, while the problem remains consciously unrecognized. In economically developed nations, some double-bind victims eventually find themselves in mental hospitals. In the underdeveloped world, they often become insurgents.

God's greatest irony was inflicted in the Garden of Eden. He generously equipped humans to enjoy erotic, sensual pleasures and fulfillments. He then capriciously expelled Adam and Eve from the garden and forbade them unrestrained play with their delightful toys under a threat of eternal damnation. The original sin described in Genesis may have been the first double bind. It is still with us.

At least four variations of the double bind regularly appear in human relationships. They are perpetuated by the ad media and have evolved as consciously unnoticed aspects of culture.

### Perceptual Validity Questioned

Often individuals or groups make a generally valid reality-oriented perception about their world and are subsequently punished for it by a significant high-credibility authority. This double bind often occurs between husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, media and audiences, leaders and followers. Humans conditioned by contradictory perceptual inter-

pretations find it difficult to behave appropriately. Self-enforced, delusionary perceptions usually prevail.

The media or other authority sources tell you repeatedly they would not lie to you, they always tell you the truth. You then repeatedly catch them in lies, misrepresentations, and deceitful manipulations. Your first option—if you continue to play the game—is to accept the lies as truths, to adapt your perception to their fraudulent reality. Eventually, however, you may become confused and distraught. Repression of the contradictory reality may come to the rescue. Conscious knowledge of the lie disappears from the surface. The second option is confrontation, which is difficult if the liars are parents, mates, presidents, trusted ad media, or other valued information sources—very difficult indeed.

Some individuals reject the high-credibility source of the lie, walk away, and search for other less potentially damaging relationships. Anyone who states he or she would never lie to you has just told a whopper. There are, of course, lies of omission, commission, and interpretation. Individuals lie continuously, even if only to themselves about not lying.

Opting out of the system may be extremely difficult, if not impossible. Unable to disconnect, individuals spend much time attempting to discover how reality should be perceived, from which perspective—the incessant and always unfulfilled search for truth. Tell me, what is “love,” “truth,” “life,” “faith,” “democracy,” “freedom,” the best toothpaste, automobile, cigarette, underarm deodorant, et cetera? The search often appears in evangelical and born-again religious ritual: “God told me . . .”

### Sanity in an Insane Situation

Another double-bind example often appears in hijack and hostage situations. During confinement, hostages who attempt to cooperate and to understand their captors' perceptions (psychotic though the terrorists may be) are labeled traitors, brainwashed cowards, and weak-willed sycophants upon release. Their behavior and perceptions of their situation, nevertheless, were quite sane,

reality-oriented in the interest of survival and adjustment, within a totally insane situation.

Reasonable prisoner behavior appears unreasonable to those outside the situation. Military organizations utilize a debriefing process for released prisoners. Debriefing is a systematic reorientation from a reality/survival perception (sanity, perhaps) consistent with the perceptions of those on the outside. Yet outsiders can never really comprehend the fear, exhaustion, anxiety, hopelessness, and intense desire to survive prisoners must endure in confinement.

### Be Grateful!

A third type of double bind occurs when people are expected to feel differently than they actually feel. Guilt and self-condemnation result when people are expected to feel something they do not or when they feel something they are not supposed to. Instead of gaining approval for what they perceive as honest feelings, they are punished. The paradox can be expressed as, “After all I (or we) have done for you! You should at least be grateful, happy, proud, loyal, loving, faithful, sexual, patriotic, devout, trusting, obedient, agreeable” . . . ad infinitum. This paradox, like that of the appropriate-inappropriate behavior of the prisoner or hostage, can result in depression or worse. When individuals feel responsible for behavior over which they have little control, inconsistent with the expectations that surround them, they can become ill. The double bind can evolve into a shattering neurosis from its origin as a normal response to an abnormal situation. The media abounds in such hidden, unconscious entrapments.

### Do, but Don't

When significant high-credibility authorities—leaders, employers, parents, spouses, friends, governments, ideological or cultural systems—both *demand* and *prohibit* actions, policies, thoughts, or behaviors, individuals become trapped in a double bind. They can obey only by disobeying. This paradox takes such forms as:

Win by any means, but always be honest!

Do what I say, not what you think you should do!

Truthfulness is always the best policy, but business is business!

Individualism, survival of the fittest, is a basic law of nature. Restrictions upon freedom kill initiative and are un-American. But people should work for common purposes, and stand loyally together. Individuals should not live only for themselves!

Be successful, but the kind of person you are is more important than success!

The family is America's basic, sacred institution, but national welfare depends upon business, so other institutions must conform to business!

Democracy is the basis for freedom and equality, yet nothing would ever get done if left to popular vote. No businessperson or employer would tolerate collective decisions!

Human beings are rational and can be trusted to do the right thing, yet some are brighter than others so you can't wait for them to make up their minds!

Religion and the pursuit of a better life are our ultimate objectives, but we owe it to ourselves to make as much money as possible!

We believe in progress and new ideas, yet the old fundamentals are best. Rapid change must be avoided!

The great challenge of capitalism and/or communism is to escape the rules of that way of life.

Capital and labor are partners, but avoid paying higher wages than necessary.

Education is good, but practical people get things done!

Women are sacred, but not very practical, and inferior in their reasoning power and abilities.

Patriotism and public service are the highest ideals, but individuals must look out for themselves!

Double-bind demands cannot be fulfilled. Consider the commands: "Be spontaneous!" (spontaneity cannot be ordered); "Be sexual!" (physiology is not subject to verbal commands); or "Treat

all people as equals!" (an instruction from a superior); "Be permissive!" (to obey is obedience).

Consider the Zen proverb:

*To think I am not going  
To think of you anymore,  
Is still thinking of you.  
Let me try not to think  
I am not going to think of you.  
But this, of course, is still  
Thinking of you.*

Commercial artists have traditionally played games with audience perceptions of objectivity and reality. Their goals were usually money, profit, fame, status, power, or all of the above. Madison Avenue refined the game with enormous investments and high technology, but they did not invent it. Norman Rockwell, commercial artist par excellence, constructed his creations around every self-sealing premise alive and well among the older, middle-class, WASP, conservative, sentimental, and conformist U.S. population. He knew his audience intimately and exploited their illusions mercilessly.

These illusions of self are not reality-oriented; they may in fact sharply contradict reality perceptions. Rockwell ingeniously constructed a world that never was but one his audience desperately needed to idealize and believe had once existed. Projective fantasies appeal to people whose current reality lacks luster and romance. The fantasy is created by regression, moving back to an idealized past. Of course, in earlier periods, people idealized an even earlier time.

In a sentimental appeal to traditional middle-class values, the world's richest artist (a vital criterion of artistic worth) created an expensive porcelain Mother's Day plate (fig. 28). As every child feels some guilt for leaving mother after maturation, the symbol of motherhood has long been used to manipulate consumer behavior. The sales brochure describes the plate painting—*Mother's Blessing*—as, "A rare Rockwell scene that never will be found among magazine covers, posters, or story illustrations. Its illumination and contrast are reminiscent of Renaissance masterpieces.

But the faces are unmistakably Norman Rockwell. Perhaps the most sensitive Mother's Day art ever issued." The brochure's slick sales hype is designed to extract a sizable fortune from consumers trained to accept uncritically media at face value. The lush ad copy might even evoke tears. Maudlin sentimentality, "corn" in media jargon, is a powerful weapon.

In the Rockwell painting, the mother's left hand rests not on the top but on the back of her daughter's head. In terms of movement, she appears to be directing the child's gaze toward the arms of the boy, presumably her older brother. The brother's hands are clasped in prayer, his eyes closed, his forearms making a V. If the painting is turned on its left side, the boy's forearm looks curiously constructed. Block out all the other details in the painting and carefully study the right forearm in isolation (fig. 56). The erect genital is not as dramatically detailed as in the Tanqueray gin ad (fig. 31), but the motive was similar—to sell, to sell, to sell, to sell . . .

The Bigallo Crucifix with Saints (fig. 29), tempera on wood, was painted circa 1240–70 by an anonymous Italian. The embed, which should be readily apparent, is similar to that in the Tanqueray Gin ad (fig. 31), though not as skillfully crafted; the air brush would not be invented for another seven centuries. The Bigallo Crucifix is presently owned by the Art Institute of Chicago. It is curious how time can add value to something perceived as art. Religious art has always been crassly merchandised throughout the world. It is remarkable that this example survived 750 years, ending up in one of the world's most prestigious museums. The reader should keep in mind this crucifix (a symbol) has nothing to do with Christianity, Catholicism, or Jesus Christ. It was painted simply to sell, and indeed it sold—over and over for three-fourths of a millennium. The icon is presently valued at over half a million dollars. The Bigallo Crucifix is as remote from Christianity as the Rockwell painting. Indeed, both works are travesties—private jokes about human perceptual gullibility. But, they sold, and sold, and sold, and are still selling.

Vertically on the Christ figure's tortured body appears an embedded male genital (fig. 57). The face displays humorously pained resignation, as though he carried the weight of the world (fig. 58). Had the genital been consciously perceived, it is doubtful whether the work would have survived seven and a half centuries.

The artist would have ended his career in a heretic's execution had his repressed embed become conscious among viewers. The saint on the left stares directly at the erect penis with an expression of awe and humility, touched perhaps with envy.

Considering the energy currently expended in the study of human communication, it is amazing that subliminal techniques are so little known to people other than the artists who use them. The reasons such chicanery remains hidden say more about human pretensions and avarice than most wish to deal with consciously. The manipulated are willing victims often because of their expectations of gain.

"We thought we knew what we were doing, but there was that small problem of subliminal motivations and perceptions!" This could become the epitaph of world civilization embedded in the last nuclear fireball.

### Sealed for an Eternity

The scattered load of passengers settled into their seats for the three-hour flight from Houston to Los Angeles. The U.S. Air Force major in the next seat smiled warmly as he ordered a dry martini. A large man with a rugged, heavy face and a warm, easy smile, he reminded me of a character from a Norman Rockwell painting.

"Stationed in Los Angeles?" I asked.

"Lompoc, a hundred miles north," he replied.

I noticed the two-and-a-half-inch-long silver missile pinned to his tunic. "Missile commander?" I ventured.

He smiled with a trace of pride and nodded. Over the next two hours, the conversation was warm, cordial, and interesting. We exchanged pictures of our wives, our children, even our houses. Both of us were roughly the same age, with the same level of income and education. I had spent four and a half years in the air force during World War II.

Since the beginning of our conversation, I had wondered about the major's job. I hesitated to draw a subject loaded with security questions into a casual conversation between strangers. But I had never met anyone who spent his working life buried in a vault

deep underground, training incessantly for the day he would turn a key that launched multiple-warhead missiles at human populations thousands of miles away. The major brought up the subject.

"I'm going for early retirement next year. Twenty years in the military is enough for one lifetime." He described an executive job offer from an aerospace company.

"Ever regret staying in the air force?" I asked.

"All of us do sometimes," he answered. "But it's been a good life, especially with the missiles. They don't transfer us around like the rest. Family housing and allowances are good, promotions virtually automatic. They prefer men with families—more settled, reliable, more dedicated to the job. They give us plenty of free time."

"What about duty in a control bunker?" I asked, trying to appear casual as I talked toward the subject of his work.

There was only a momentary trace of guarded apprehension on his face after the question. He spoke matter-of-factly. "Not much to it. Really! Once you memorize the procedures, you only have to keep up with changes and new gadgets. All you need is a good memory."

"Ever have any doubts about turning the launch key?" I asked, keeping my voice casual, mildly interested.

"No, none at all," he answered. "If they had any doubts about us, we'd never be assigned to missiles. When word comes down, we launch. Simple as that! Besides, at that point you're so busy there's no time to think about anything other than the job. They train us not to think about people. No sense getting yourself upset. It's just a job. We're only technicians. We do what we're told."

Our conversation rambled on until the plane lost altitude for our L.A. landing. We talked about mundane problems of raising teenagers, the cost of living, and airline dinners. The talk was light, friendly, relaxed, and only a few borderline controversial topics were touched on. We shook hands as we parted at the terminal gate.

For many months after this encounter with the missile commander, I could not get him off my mind. I had run head-on into a cultural double bind. The major would probably be described by his neighbors as an average person, nothing remotely outstand-

ing, spectacular, or unusual about him. He appeared to be a father devoted to his family and children, a good husband in every respect—sober, hard-working, modestly ambitious, an apparently kind, respectable person whose morality, sanity, and loyalty to his country would never be questioned—neither by the major himself, by his employers, nor by the world in which he lives.

The stark contradiction between what society has been indoctrinated to perceive as an outstanding citizen and the horror this one was prepared to initiate on the command of some faceless higher authority—communicated via an unsensing, unfeeling computer—illustrated the central question in human survival today. Individuals in the U.S. and U.S.S.R., and numerous other nations, have been exhaustively brainwashed to hide from themselves the reality of their vocations. This reality lies hidden behind carefully repressed reality associations, technological labels, carefully selected euphemisms, and patriotic slogans: "nuclear deterrent," "keeping the peace," "freedom's guardians," et cetera.

It is not easy to compare U.S. and U.S.S.R. missile commanders to the mindless bureaucrats who ran Nazi death camps. The Nuremberg war-crimes trials, and later Adolf Eichmann's trial in Tel Aviv, revealed a vitally important insight few observers recognized at the time. The SS and Gestapo, by the highest standards of loyalty, honor, and patriotism of their day, were superpatriots. Their dedication and sacrifice were qualities legitimized within German society by an uncritical, self-preoccupied population that benefited—at least in the early years—from repressed reality perceptions. The SS were considered brave, honorable, noble, even deeply religious patriots who served their nation, leaders, ideology, and perceived sacred mission to the end. Patriots such as these exist in every nation, certainly in the U.S. and U.S.S.R. This should frighten everyone, but it will not as long as the world persists in its perception of war criminals not as simple-minded, obedient fools but as special villains or psychopaths.

Paradox invariably confuses the herd mentality trained only to superficially evaluate the obvious. Once the keys have been turned in the missile-control centers, of course, it won't make any difference. The "objective realities" that everyone believed justified the ultimate sacrifice will not be around anymore. No humans will be

left to perceive reality as objective. The self-sealing premises will finally have been sealed for eternity.

*A man who specializes in killing other men—  
regardless of ideology—is an assassin!*

Jorge Luis Borges,  
*Fervor de Buenos Aires*

## II | THE PERMANENTLY CLOSED MIND

Reality is nothing but the free choice of one of many doors that are open at all times.

Hermann Hesse, *Steppenwolf*

We must remember that we do not observe nature as it actually exists, but nature exposed to our methods of perception (ways of seeing). The theories determine what we can or cannot observe.

Albert Einstein, *The Meaning of Relativity*

Skepticism and scientific conviction exist in modern man side by side with old-fashioned prejudices, outdated habits of thought and feeling, obstinate misinterpretations, and blind ignorance.

Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols*

Sophisticated development of persuasion technology over the past half century changed the old rules of human communication. As ad and public-relations industries became more skillful in the management of public opinion, attitudes, beliefs, and value systems, it became increasingly imperative to keep secret and enable the population to repress awareness of what the manipulators were up to. Perceptual management cannot succeed if acknowledged, so perceptual controls at conscious and unconscious levels proliferated. Research into language and culture were successfully side-tracked into intellectually sterile, irrelevant directions. Behaviorism in the social and behavioral sciences fitted well the ideological objectives of commercial media. Behaviorism as a scientific or quasi-religious doctrine ensured the social sciences would exhaust themselves endlessly with trivial, inconsequential research that rarely conflicted with the status quo—the best of all possible worlds. Cognitive psychology, sociology, and anthropology became dominant scholarly perspectives. Behaviorism disavowed the existence of the unconscious, terming it "mentalist." The unconscious has virtually disappeared in North America as a topic of study outside the mass-communications industry.

Media-manipulation technology and passive, muted, trivia-preoccupied social sciences are mutually reinforcing cultural characteristics. As U.S. society became increasingly saturated by commercial, manipulative media, scholars legitimized the fantasy that such manipulation was impossible, that the freedom-loving U.S. was invulnerable to propaganda. The population thought, as it was taught to think, that it thought for itself. Contradiction and paradox in this simplistic logic was dismissed or ignored. Besides, the media bombarded the population with fairy-tale assurances that they never lied, could always be trusted, were free of bias and vested interest and diligently served the cause of freedom and democracy.

Every part of a cultural system is magnificently complementary—like beautiful precision mechanisms in an expensive mechanical watch. Every tiny part and function is inextricably integrated and supportive of every other part and function. Cultures integrate themselves in ways, however, that are often non-linear, nonverbal, extremely complex and subtle, and most difficult to perceive consciously. There is also a time delay. Values appear-

ing today may not become nationally visible for ten to forty years.

National educational systems usually reflect values of the prevailing socioeconomic systems. If greed, acquisitiveness, selfishness, and self-indulgence are fundamental to the economy, education adapts its focus accordingly. The single most dramatic change in education over the past thirty-five years has been the steady growth of get-a-job courses, coupled with the rapid decline in learn-to-read, -write, -mathematize, and -think courses. Through World War II, U.S. education was viewed as an agent of socioeconomic-cultural change. Essays of distinguished educators from the 1930s and '40s—such as Robert M. Hutchins's *The Higher Learning in America* (on liberal arts education)—today appear as anachronistic idealism out of step with contemporary realities. Today's marketable educational commodity is superficial and simplistic. Self-indulgence and self-aggrandizement are now fundamental philosophical premises. The status quo, the best of all possible worlds, has become the model for change. School systems have become indoctrination centers where students are trained, rather than educated, to fit in, find their place, certainly not to challenge the system or the unknown. The media-cultured, indulgence-demanding U.S. university student is almost unique in the world. Education is still a highly competitive privilege in Asia, Europe, and especially in the U.S.S.R.

A major 1986 study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching revealed that over 90% of university students and 88% of their parents saw the primary reason for higher education as careerist—jobs, money, and success. Only 28% of parents and 27% of high school students saw education as a means to pursue scholarship, thoughtful citizenship, and a well-rounded education as a foundation for life experiences. The study was titled *Colleges: The Undergraduate Experience in America*. It revealed that only 19% of humanities students have guaranteed jobs upon graduation, compared with 90% for business majors. Student employment preoccupation is foolish but is used as a recruiting or marketing device by schools. One University of Texas dean commented they could not publish a catalogue course description and title unless it appeared to relate directly to employment. During their lifetimes, university graduates will hold dozens of jobs. Job skills constantly change and rapidly become obsolete. To waste valuable and expensive educational years studying for a job, which

often does not exist upon graduation, squanders precious resources and is folly.

Nevertheless, bachelor's degrees in business subjects doubled from 114,865 in 1971 to 230,031 in 1984, BAs in English and literature plunged from 57,026 to 26,419. Various universities dropped such subjects as classical languages, geology, and music education. Many severely curtailed studies in philosophy, languages, literature, and history in favor of such trivia as hotel and restaurant management courses.

The Carnegie study cited numerous shortcomings in the typical undergraduate experience:

1. An absent, limited, or confused view of scholarship, science, research, the traditions of knowledge, and the enrichment of human life from learning.
2. A wide, generalized inability among university students to adequately read, write, and think.
3. Fragmented, disjointed course structures where topical, superficial specializations replace depth of insight.
4. Widespread faculty acquiescence to the legitimization of banal course and curriculum content. Excellence in critical, analytical teaching is generally ignored in favor of conformity, upon which promotions and tenure often hang.
5. A separation and downgrading of required undergraduate education from the narrowly focused courses in the major. General education courses are often taught by the least qualified and most poorly compensated faculty.
6. The objectives of higher education have become confused and degraded. Goals are rarely discussed; if mentioned at all, they are expressed in terms of current employment opportunities—jobs, money, and success.

Similar criticisms of U.S. university education have recently come from such authoritative sources as the Association of American Colleges, the National Institute of Education, and the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Education. Higher education has converted itself into an overly merchandised system of trade schools. Careerist-oriented institutions are generally course-deficient in languages, arts, history, study of social and government institutions,

and in the natural and physical sciences, where mere technology is considered science. Studies of moral or ethical issues are virtually nonexistent.

Universities are often cultural captives of the media-dominated marketing culture. Pandering to public approval, ad media view outstanding intelligence as abnormal. Intelligence must be made to appear stupid. Stupidity is often celebrated as outstanding intelligence. The confused, impractical intellectual is a well-published and broadcast stereotype. Moral individuals are likewise regarded as simpletons. Nonentities become models of virtue. Those who struggled toward new truths are viewed as naïve or seditious.

U.S. education certainly has not equipped average citizens to deal with manipulative media technology in their lifelong environment. Just the opposite: Education has conditioned the population to become victims, trained to fit into the commercial culture as passive, obedient consumers. Ad media quietly changed the rules of logic, reason, and the human perception of human perception. Along the way, few attempts were made to probe what was going on. Critics probably would not have been believed, in any event. This was a clever accomplishment, difficult to expose, and very good business. Media sustained the audience's illusions that all was well, that nothing had changed except for the better as everyone became smarter, better informed, more perceptive, more able to think for themselves.

### **The Well-Washed Brain**

In 1989 a person in the U.S. confronted a cultural saturation of almost \$150 billion of ad propaganda. This media investment usually increases by 10% to 15% annually. The ad investment in cultural propaganda does not include vast amounts spent for promotion, public relations, and other manipulative media technologies.

No nation in the history of the world has ever been so exhaustively propagandized, in quality, quantity, intensity, and technological innovativeness. The individual who seeks to survive this super con confronts a formidable adversary. After all the brand and product purchase shifting occurs, this massive annual invest-

ment supports an integrated, interlocking cultural value system.

For the very few, there may exist the possibility of an isolated tropical paradise devoid of media. Most people simply cannot afford to drop out. They must seek some way to sustain sanity in the media madhouse. Defensive strategies against brainwashing are relatively simple. They would probably work best, however, if initiated during early childhood.

### Always Act to Increase the Number of Options Available

Most individuals have been educated from childhood to decrease the number of options—to seek out *truth*. Any commitment to one single view takes on ideological significance, as sales hype for a toothpaste, a religion, or a political candidate. There are multiple answers to every question, problem, or objective. Seek them out. Find at least three, preferably five, even ten, or more. Opt tentatively for the option that appears most likely to succeed for your desired objective. Be prepared to jettison it in favor of another, at any moment, if disaster threatens.

Remember that the content of any verbal ideology, in purchasing, political, or religious behaviors, remains unrelated to the reality. Ideological premises are usually self-sealing. They conflict with other ideologies. This may not be a matter of life and death when one commits to a brand of soap, but unquestioning, blind commitment to political, military, economic, and religious ideologies has inflicted centuries of devastation on the world. Ideologies are based upon stereotypical views of both self and the world. Stereotypes can refute or confirm any ideological perspective and justify unjust, violent, ruthless, dehumanized behaviors that promise to sustain the ideology.

Curiously, acts that support ideological conviction usually contradict the ethics of the ideology. The determination to save the world from communism and/or capitalism, even if everyone must be destroyed in the process, is one of many such paradoxes. Ideologies offer fantasies of solving the problems of human existence—*injustice, greed, inequality, wealth, poverty, etc.*—but only fantasies. Simplistic solutions usually intensify the problems they pro-

pose to resolve. In the end, the most charismatic leader will pass from power.

Human susceptibility to ideological persuasion is based on an eternally unfulfilled promise of meaning and order, a stereotypical answer to loneliness, boredom, fear, threats of hunger, illness, insecurity, and political, moral, or social chaos. These threats are hyped incessantly in the commercial media. Constant media massage from these threats sustains a compulsive search for questions and answers, cause and effect, and ideological commitment. The media massage sets the latest trend in consumption, entertainment, politics, business, industry, the military, and religions with their related stereotypical promises of reduced anxiety. Freedom is a Datsun, a Maxi-pad, a vote for a political candidate, a contribution to a religious prophet, or whatever else provides profit to some hustler.

Once initiated, the fantasies self-perpetuate. The final goal of every ideology is mythological, a never attainable utopia. Utopias *must* remain unobtainable, out of reach, the carrot on the stick that keeps the jackass plodding along writing checks. Time, the fourth dimension, always continues, every moment marking a change in the conditions that gave meaning to the words and symbols. “Eternal” truths must continually be reinforced, refueled, propped up.

Questions with only yes-and-no, true-and-false, or right-and-wrong answers constitute a language removed from human intelligence. They are traps set for primitives. Verbally constructed dilemmas are not real dilemmas. They are merely manipulations, usually constructed so anyone who answers and commits himself or herself loses. The dilemma manufacturer wins. Ads and the media content they control are crammed full of these ersatz dilemmas. They usually appear resolvable through purchases, allegiances, votes, contributions, prayers, or whatever else you have to offer. Cash is usually preferred.

Instead of creatively searching out unique, fact-oriented solutions to real problems, populations are taught to seek out problems resolvable through the solutions that benefit leaders in government, politics, industry, military, media and their advertisers, or anyone else who can afford to enter the game. They create the problem, then create and sell the answer to the problem.

Once both the leadership and followers become entrapped in mutually reinforcing illusions, self-fulfilling prophecies, and self-sealing premises, behavior and decision-making become tragically predictable and narrowly focused. In competition, anyone who becomes predictable, loses.

### Avoid Polarization, Assertion, or Negation

Stand outside verbal constructions of excluded-middle opposites. The moment individuals are pulled into a dichotomy, control is lost—if, indeed, they had any control to begin with. A passive rather than an active negation always throws the opposition into confusion. Wait and see! Observe! Think! Compare! Evaluate! Play with alternative options and perspectives! Above all, relax. Act only when it is clearly in your interest to act. Consider one of the most important, always available options: Do Nothing!

Avoid the primitive *yes* and *no*. Try to understand everything that can be understood about multiple options. Probe what is *unknowable*! If there does not appear to be time for reflection, change the appearance of time. Time is a perceptual abstraction stretchable or condensable to suit any objective. Students of hypnosis experiment with time distortion—ten mintues of relaxation can be perceptually expanded into eight hours of deep rest.

Sensitize yourself to stereotypical thinking. Ads and commercial media (including news) are loaded with stereotypes; these are excellent places to study meaningless generalizations. They offer the most simplistic abstractions. They do not, of course, simplify perceivable realities and life processes. Stereotypes or images provide momentary tranquillity. They remove the necessity for thought, reasoning, and critical judgment. They also conceal ticking bombs behind simplistic façades. Stereotypes or images are universally wrong, damaging, self-defeating, and grossly misleading.

The world population comprises individuals, each with a unique assortment of perceivable similarities and differences. All are distinct. No two have the same physiology or psychology. Victims of stereotypical thinking include both the labelers and the victims they label.

### Privately Question Assumptions, Most Especially Those You Most Treasure

*Heresy can become an exciting way of life.* Heresy, however, is impossible without a “true” doctrine. Without heresy, “true” doctrines congeal and atrophy into hopeless sterility. Heresy is essential for creativity, insight, and progress. Whenever heresy was silenced, great suffering and evil ensued. People are often relieved when heresy is not apparent, when no one is rocking the boat. Peace and quiet tranquilize, though they should be terrifying. Heresy and deviance are the foundations of every democratic system. Almost anyone can learn to love deviants and heretics, though it may not be easy at first.

Ideological perspectives are inherently hypocritical. Hypocrisy that takes the form of a denial of hypocrisy is hypocrisy squared. “Trust me! I would not lie to you!” The American Association of Advertising Agencies ad (fig. 8) is a superb example. Dissent, criticism, or any opposition to an established ideology—such as media ad misrepresentations, public-relations flimflam, and promotional puffery—is vital to a nation’s health.

Ideological failures rarely produce insights into the reasons for failure or into the nature of ideology. Instead, failures usually energize the zealot into a frantic search for a new theory that can be converted into another ideology. Thus, the disillusioned communist becomes a right-wing religious fanatic, and vice versa. The only escape appears to be the realization that ideology is a perceptual construction, based on fantasy perceptions and stereotypical generalizations. Ideologies usually avoid confirmable, autonomous, fact-oriented perceptions.

The power of ad and public-relations media converts theories into ideologies and enforces the resultant fantasy constructions. Public resistance to ad media can be developed into a deviant heresy that in the beginning will be attacked by the majority. The prevailing system was legitimized by powerful, high-credibility, mutually reinforcing powers—universities, government bureaucracies, corporations, et cetera. Inherent contradictions were ignored, suppressed, or repressed. The frantic search for burning—though actually trivial—issues and problems sidetracked attention

away from realities. Trivia begets trivia. Trivial pursuits—feature stories, game shows, situation comedies, and pap—dominate the world of ad media. Substance is considered a minor-audience throwaway to appease critics. Public broadcasting remains an attempt by commercial broadcasters to rid themselves of a non-profitable, minority audience.

Become a heretic. Human perception will likely remain an ongoing intellectual crap game. It is important that humans never completely resolve their perceptual dilemmas. The instabilities, insecurities, surprises, contradictions, and paradoxes might become enjoyable—once consciously recognized. Consider the fun and challenge of fighting the army of pandering pitch artists who sell, manipulate, and exploit human perceptual weakness, along with their political sycophants.

### Seeing Must Not Be Believing

Little in human perception is what it appears to be. When abstracted into verbal, pictorial, or mathematical languages, perceptions become even further removed from the initial realities perceived. Observers can never be separated from their perceptions, except through verbal fictions. Subjectivity levels in perception and language remain a matter of more or less, rather than either/or. And, finally, no serious consideration of perception can ignore unconsciously induced information—the source of basic predispositions that underlie conscious perceptions.

These are not new ideas. They date to at least Protagoras and other early Greek sophist philosophers from the fifth century B.C., through Kant in the eighteenth century, and to modern philosophers of science such as Korzybski, Russell, Malinowski, Einstein, and Wittgenstein. There is very little new in the world of ideas—or in any other world for that matter. There exist only old concepts window-dressed with new labels, often coupled with promotional hype. Such hype, which supports merchandising cultures, can prevail only through ignorance and repression. Individuals culture-trained in simplistic perceptions of the world are easy victims, victims who resist attempts to deal with perceptual processes. They

shout vociferously about freedom, as they submit and obey as slaves.

For example, anyone who perceives the Tanqueray emerald (fig. 5) as reality—an actual emerald—displays a perceptual inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality. That audiences have been carefully educated not to make this important discrimination illustrates mind control far more advanced than that conceived by Huxley or Orwell. The media educates its population to prefer fantasy over reality.

Cornell astronomer Carl Sagan compared the U.S. and U.S.S.R. to two men in a room, standing knee-deep in gasoline. Each holds a handful of matches, threatening to light them to punish the other for misdeeds, evil motives, and provocative behaviors. Sagan might have added one additional factor to the story.

The room is pitch dark. Each man passionately claims to serve his vision of objective reality. Each has an arsenal of cultural-linguistic clichés, diagnostic labels, prejudices, stereotypes, objectivity illusions, and self-sealing premises. As sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote in his *The Causes of World War Three*, “It does not matter how small the probability of a nuclear accident is in relation to time. It is statistically demonstrable that as time passes, the probability approaches certainty.”

Media’s perceptual stranglehold should not surprise anyone capable of independent judgment. Actors remain employable only because they create illusions, fantasies, and credible representations of usually stereotypical characters. The U.S., not so strangely perhaps, elected an actor as president. Never before in the history of the world had a professional actor become a head of state. Many of the world’s great leaders were accomplished actors, but not by profession; they rose to leadership as statesmen, administrators, authors, militarists, scholars, or from industry and commerce.

Questions of verbal and visual illiteracy go far beyond merely learning to read and write. The world now faces questions of ethical illiteracy. If there are answers to the dilemmas posed by subliminal manipulation, they appear to lie with the manipulated, not with the manipulators. Laws would have little effect, except possibly to publicize the issue. Humans can, however, be taught in the interest of survival to accept individual responsibility for

perceptual constructions. They each have the potential to defend themselves. Further, each can learn to create unique individualized relationships with perceived realities. Each can enjoy illusions, fantasies, and projections to the fullest without fear of being entrapped. The human perceptual process has exciting potentialities, barely understood at this point in time. People can avoid being conned into someone else's self-serving simple answers to complex questions.

Unfortunately, the current language-cultural system conditions people not only to permit themselves to be manipulated but to seek it out. There will always be, it appears, people on the make who have a plausible description of what is beautiful, godlike, fair, humorous, loving, faithful, trusting, sexy, good, and *true*—useful to their own, not their believers', interests.

Fantasy science filled the ideological vacuum when traditional religious, philosophical, and ethical ideals faded. Perceptions of "objective" truth replaced truth based in superstition. Ideologies must be absolute, truth must prove everything. Religious, political, social, or economic ideologies are based on the myth of tomorrow, often extended to eternity, but usually focused no farther than the end of the next generation. When approached by anyone carrying such a package, walk rapidly in the opposite direction.

The basic survival problem for modern civilization is how to get out of the problem and away from self-serving solutions to the problem. This will not be easy. Most perceived solutions soon become the problem, another Ouroboros. Only by stepping outside the circle, the never-ending succession of problem-solution-problem-solution, ad infinitum, can we ever resolve problems. The problem with human existence is, in effect, human existence. Approached from an evolutionary perspective—if this is possible with time apparently running out—awareness of perceptual limitations, frailties, and the heritage of vulnerability must somehow become a part of cultural conditioning. An improved, survival-oriented, humanistic construction would still remain a construction, but hopefully one that would better fit a continuation of civilization and life.

## Eight Steps to Survival

At the risk of simplifying thought processes—as varied and unique as individuals who think, or even those who only think they think—here are several steps that could decrease human vulnerability to manipulation by the media.

1. *Relax.* Under the constant pressures of modern media, this must be learned, or re-learned. Techniques range from simple deep breathing to autohypnosis and meditation. Relaxation increases the probability of successful, fact-oriented reality perception. Tension, stress, and anxiety increase vulnerability to manipulation. Stress reduction is the most effective approach to analyzing subliminal stimuli, underlying meaning, and motives.
2. *Delay.* Tentative conclusions are imperative. Time is an abstraction, usually engineered to the advantage of some at the disadvantage of others. Slow down. Give yourself time. Time pressure usually triggers perceptual defenses.
3. *Perceive.* Perceptual analysis of what is perceived—and the abstraction process through which it is described—can improve reality perception. Study your reactions to the reactions of others. Then, study their reactions to your reactions. And, finally, examine your perceptions of their perceptions. Consciously consider the entire perceptual concept of communication. This can be fun! It immediately puts you beyond the reach of most ad and media hype. Compare media fantasy perceptions with reality—the perceivable real world.
4. *Decontextualize.* Invert logical, syntactical thought. Normal expectations often appear quite abnormal when viewed out of context. Try crazy, illogical, upside-down and inside-out perceptions of words and pictures. Experiment with perceptual illogic. Creativity can often keep you out of trouble and provide unsuspected answers concealed in self-sealing premises—both yours and those of others.
5. *Molecularize.* Take apart words and pictures. Look for meaning buried within your perceptions. Examine minute fragments. Everything, even the smallest and least conspicuous,

perceived by humans is significant, especially that which appears insignificant. Look most carefully at perceptions your mind tells you are irrelevant. No insignificant, meaningless human perceptions exist.

6. *Symbolize.* Symbols often carry multiple, unconscious meanings. Everything perceived is symbolic—words, things, pictures, and people. Play with symbols. Look for relationships or structures your conscious mind rejects as silly. Look for multiple meanings, meaning without meaning, meaning within meaning, meaning either under or on top of meaning. Probe deeply and carefully.
7. *Motivate.* Work on motive analysis. Every communication involves motives, especially those we deny. Both motives of the initiator and the audience are important. Motives exist at conscious and unconscious levels. Rank the possible motives involved. Look for impossible or unlikely motives. Keep the question of motives open. Motives can be deep, complex, multiple, interlocking, and often appear contradictory. No communication can be meaningfully evaluated without consideration of motives. The motivation to win may camouflage the motive to lose, or vice versa. Apparent winners may unconsciously seek an appropriate disaster so they can lose spectacularly.
8. *Evaluate.* Make certain you have a clear idea about who is talking to whom, about what and whom. The distinctions humans make verbally, the ideologies they pursue, evaluations they perform, theories they espouse, decisions they announce, principles they propose, and arguments they provoke reveal the inner person. They reveal far more about the individual and his or her ways of perceiving the world than they do about the topics they ostensibly describe. Accept nothing and no one at face value.

### The High Cost of Fraudulent Reality Perceptions

The destruction of mythological concepts of objective truth deeply troubles the culturally indoctrinated. Some individuals have

even responded to the idea with consideration of suicide. Is life worth living without absolute, objective truth? It both *is* and *has been*. Albert Camus explored suicide as an answer to the disappearance of “objective truth” in his modern parable *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Sisyphus was the duplicitous King of Corinth—a trickster, manipulator, and master thief. He cheated even death by manipulating perceptions of reality. He played off one “eternal truth” against other “eternal truths” for whatever served his immediate purpose, not unlike contemporary religious, economic, and political demagogues. A widely popular figure in Homeric literature—not unlike the generations of popular con artists who followed—the gods finally punished him eternally in Hades. Sisyphus was condemned to roll a huge stone up a hill, painfully and laboriously, only to have it roll down once he reached the summit. Over and over and over and over, for an eternity. Had not the eternal “objective truths” of ancient Greece perished with their civilization, such punishment might be useful today. Imagine ad and media hucksters, self-serving politicians, manipulative preachers, and lying salespersons finally doing an honest day’s work.

Questions of objective truth, however, are not simple. Neither are each individual’s answers to the questions. Humans somehow survived several million years of evolution with belief systems based upon concepts of objective truth. These truths, however, changed dramatically over the centuries, adapting to new technologies, cultures, languages, economics, and power elites. Human perceptual processes ingeniously designed “objective truths” that both fit the moment and could be verbally manipulated to apply to perceptions of past and future.

Language philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein explored the ways humans perceptually created words in their own fantasized images, then perceptually created themselves as part of their subjective fantasies. Eventually, they permitted social, economic, political, religious, and cultural media to manage perceptions of reality. In *Philosophical Investigations I* Wittgenstein wrote, “One thinks that one is tracing the outlines of nature over and over again. One is merely tracing around the frame through which we looked at her. A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat to us inexorably.”

Self-sealing premises, permanently closed minds sealed tightly against the intrusion of reality or assumption testing, is a formidable end result of ad media-dominated culture. Individuals who “know,” absolutely for all time, who they are, where they are going and why, are dangerous both to themselves and to the world in which they live. Self-sealed mentalities also cannot get much fun out of life, for they have little opportunity for creative play and innovation.

A survival corps—organized to retrain battered personalities dominated by self-sealing premises—might be worth the effort to create. Candidates could be selected from high up in government, business, education, and industry. Members of the military could probably be written off as a lost cause.

## EPILOGUE

Do not wait for the last judgement,  
it takes place every day!

Albert Camus, *The Fall*

The moment anyone accepts an *objective reality*, an *eternal truth*, they have become vulnerable, manipulable, and eminently exploitable. They have ceased to function as an autonomous, creative, thinking individual, living in an integrated, interdependent world.

# APPENDIX

U.S. Treasury Department, Division of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. "New Rules and Regulations." *Federal Register*, August 6, 1984, pp. 31670–76.

## Subliminals

ATF proposed a regulatory section prohibiting the use of subliminal or similar techniques in advertising of alcoholic beverages. ATF stated that subliminal or similar techniques refer to any device or technique that is used to convey or attempt to convey a message to a person by means of images or sounds of a very brief nature that cannot be perceived at a normal level of awareness.

Twenty-two comments were received and a number of witnesses presented oral testimony at the public hearings. Of the 22 comments, representing 52 individuals, all but three supported the

proposed prohibition. The main arguments against the proposed regulation were that subliminals were not used in advertising, that the advertising and broadcast industries are self-regulating in this area, and that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) already prohibits by regulation the use of subliminals.

ATF believes that action is necessary in this area. There is increasing concern by consumers over the very nature of alcoholic beverage advertising. Further, strong precedent exists for ATF action. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has declared the use of subliminals to be contrary to the public interest because they are clearly intended to be deceptive. Furthermore, the FCC saw no need to differentiate between subliminal advertising and subliminal program content.

Subliminal or similar techniques can take many forms in advertising. These forms include placing a frame in a film which appears at a speed at which the observer cannot consciously perceive its presence, but subconsciously the word, phrase, or scene is registered. Another and more prevalent form is the insertion of words or body forms (embeds) by the use of shadows or shading, or the substitution of forms and shapes generally associated with the body.

Although subliminals or similar techniques are prohibited by the FTC and voluntary advertising and broadcasting codes, ATF has jurisdiction over the advertising of alcoholic beverages. Subliminals are inherently deceptive because the consumer does not perceive them at a normal level of awareness, and thus is given no choice whether to accept or reject the message, as is the case with normal advertising. ATF holds that this type of advertising technique is false and deceptive, and is prohibited by law. Therefore, ATF is issuing regulations prohibiting the use of subliminals or similar techniques.

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# INDEX

Abstracting process, 42  
 Abstraction:  
     defined, 68  
     language:  
         high-order, 111, 128  
         perception of, 111, 128  
     Adaptation levels (AL), 56–58  
     Adrenal glands, 60  
     Advertising Age, 42, 203–4  
     Advertising Council, 257  
     Advertising and public relations, 58–59, 74–75, 203–4, 215, 256. *See also* Media technology; specific ads and types of ads  
     background lighting in, 32–34  
     cause and effect and, 178–79  
     costs of, 57, 119–20, 253–54  
     double binds and, 243  
     double entendre in, 17–20  
     education in, 196  
     embedding in, 13–17, 22–31, 44, 48–52, 97–98, 123, 162, 207  
     figure-ground reversals in, 9–11  
     introduction of new words and meanings into language by, 112–14  
     magic words in, 171–72  
     motivation of, 185–86  
     newspaper, 104  
     non-Aristotelian logic and, 118, 120  
     personality stereotype and, 200  
     projection in, 87–88  
     regulation of, 12–13, 18, 125, 142–43, 203–4, 267–68  
     self-comparison with media personalities, 196–98  
     self-fulfilling prophecies of, 220–26  
     self-sealing premises of, 230–31  
     sex and. *See* Sex  
     sincerity in, 192  
     subliminal indoctrination in, 28, 30, 31, 40–41, 42, 47, 48–49, 57, 95, 97–98, 142–43, 159–62, 207, 223–26  
     symbolic values transferred by, 152  
     "truth in," xi, 141–43